

Dr. C. N. DESAI



SHERIDAN  
THE  
RIVALS









SHERIDAN  
THE RIVALS

*With General Introduction, Special Introduction, Life, Criticisms  
of Different Scholars, An Appreciation and Note of the English  
Comedy from the Time of Shakespeare upto Sheridan,  
Exhaustive Notes, References, Important Annotations,  
University Questions & Answers etc.*

[ THOROUGHLY REVISED & ENLARGED EDITION ]

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Age of Johnson

#### *The Social Setting and the Literary Scene*

Literature reflects the characteristic spirit and ideals of the age and a great writer is not an isolated fact but has his affiliations with the social setting, expressive of its national spirit. The literature of the age of Johnson (1738-1784) was still dominated by classicism of the Augustan age. The literary men of the Augustan age under the leadership of Dryden first started emulating the achievements of Latin literature under Emperor Augustus and the French critic, Boileau, who was very influential in England, was advising writers to find models in poets like Virgil and Horace who, it was thought, had brought natural speech to perfection.

In literary history, Sheridan belongs to the period which is designed as the age of Johnson which is also alternatively called the Age of Transition. The entire classical period (1660-1798) had three great names viz., Dryden, Pope and Johnson. Johnson was the head and symbol of the survival of a literary tradition i. e., classicism "that is secretly undermined but is still kept up through its outer supports and that even draws a certain increase of vigour from the new social elements." During the age of Johnson his throne as classical dictator of the age was already tottering to its fall, as rebellion against his authority was rife in spite of his attempt to stamp it out. In poetry, Johnson represents only the decaying tradition of Pope—not the poetical aspiration of his day in an age of transition. In the field of poetry, the events and literary changes of this period were as follows : (1) The ascendancy of the classical school of Pope and its gradual undermining, decline and fall in poetry ; (2) The gradual, though fitful, return to Nature and (3) The Romantic reaction slowly gathering power and momentum for the final overthrow of its hereditary foe. Classicism was already a spent force having degenerated into a set of rules and devices. It could no longer voice the instincts of creative genius.

Of all forms of post-Restoration literature, the drama most closely reflected the social surroundings. This is why a study

of the social conditions of this period is relevant to our understanding the work of Sheridan as a play-wright. The social background was in most respects a continuation of the conditions which prevailed in Queen Anne's time, although, historically speaking, Sheridan's dramatic career mostly synchronises with the reign of George III. The Puritans had banned pleasure but the Restoration reinstated it in all its rights. Soon its new-found liberty developed into licentiousness. Manners were allowed to slip into the toleration of vice and almost its encouragement. "The atmosphere of violent and often coarse voluptuousness in which the Court and the fashionable world are equally bathed, is intimately and secretly in accord with the arid tone and lucid outlook of the mental life of the day." It is under these diverse influences of the social surroundings that the literature of the Restoration took its rise. For the first time in English society there grew up a distinct class of writers *viz.*, the nobility with the middle-class *intelligentia* attached to it, who, to justify their superior culture and finer taste, indulged in fashions, immoralities, licences, elegance in dress and manners which were open to the charge of grossness and indecency from the strictly moral stand-point that it was easy for even those who indulged in them to laugh at or ridicule them. A satiric spirit lay at the root of a satiric view of life, manners and literature, arising out of the decay of Romanticism and the natural degeneracy of the lofty idealism that had characterised Elizabethan Age. Most of the traits of Restoration comedy had their roots in contemporary social and political circumstances. This licence of post-Restoration society was the natural reaction from the Puritan strictness which had ruled society from 1642 to 1660 when Charles II was 'restored' to the throne of England. At the time when Sheridan took up the composition of his first play *viz.*, 'The Rivals,' aristocratic society and social life with which he dealt in the play, were but gradually recovering from the licence that had marked the Stuart Restoration, although traces of indecencies and gross moral lapses of "high" life were still discernible due to the fact that this tradition of the Restoration comedy was carried on by outstanding dramatists of the period *viz.*, Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar. Farquhar is the last exponent of this decadent Comedy of Manners, revived temporarily by Congreve but at last supplanted by the Comedy of Sentiment till the Comedy of Manners staged a glorious comeback under the leadership of



## Goldsmith and Sheridan.

The age of Johnson can thus be best described as the Age of Sensibility. With the departure of the Stuarts (1688) and the rise of the educated middle-class, there came an inevitable change in public taste. "Sentimental Comedy is the earliest artistic expression of this silent transformation of the public taste." Partly on account of the rise of the Sentimental Muse and partly of the emergence of the novel, the drama as a form of literature and even as a source of public entertainment, declined." Its history during the course of the last three score years or so of the eighteenth century is one of the long descendance, interrupted by some occasional break when the talent of an isolated author (like Goldsmith and Sheridan) shines for a brief moment. So definite is the decline in this branch of literature that its effects increase with time, and towards the end of the century, it reaches the lowest point in its downward trend "

The growing industrialization of the country had its impact on rural and agricultural England. There was a distinct urban tendency among the rural folks. The economic and cultural heart of England was London whose predominance now became a commonplace of the social history of the period. Poets like Goldsmith gave expression to the "hastening ills" to which the countryside was subject as a result of the industrialisation of villages, which "had a deep appeal for a nation that was formerly agricultural, but that was already feeling the strain of a swift and unforeseen industrial change."

This change was reflected in taste and temper of the newer age reflected in the Comedy of Manners of Sheridan and brought about social, economic and political changes that came with the decay of the power and influence of the Court and several other social forces which gave ascendancy to the middle-class. The rich but idle middle-class which stepped into the shoes of the aristocracy no longer tolerated the licences and immoralities of the previous age. It was this class that gave the manners, whereas in the former age—the Restoration age proper—it was the Court and Nobles—the aristocracy that dominated society.

The Restoration comedy was extremely limited in scope. It catered to a world predominantly concerned with sex. It was 'artificial,' not natural, because it was preoccupied with superficial manners rather than with the profound realities of life.

But it was true to the spirit of mirth and amusement ; it was gay, witty, satirical, highly amusing but it did not make the slightest attempt at teaching morals. When, the stalwarts of the Restoration comedy, such as Congreve, Wycherley, Farquhar etc. had finished their works, the Comedy of Manners degenerated. It became completely immoral. The hero became the young gallant who did not believe in moral principles. The heroine also became the witty young woman of fashion who was definitely not a great respecter of morals. All this could not last for ever. A change in tone was inevitable. All this came by the force of public opinion, ultimately ushering in a new way of life with new standards of conduct giving rise to the Sentimental Comedy which abolished laughter from its legitimate place while tears filled the vacuum. In the words of Allardyce Nicoll : "Comedy had departed far from its original home. In the place of laughter, tears ; in place of intrigue, melodramatic and distressing situation ; in place of rogues, gallants and witty damsels, pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants—This is what we discover in the typical Sentimental drama of the late eighteenth century." It was given to Sheridan to revive purer elements of comedy from the unfortunate state of things in true Comedy of Manners."

The decay of the Restoration aristocracy and the emergence of the rich but idle middle-class are best described in the words of David Daiches in his "Literature and Society."

"The aristocracy freed from the threat of 'levellers' and equalitarian doctrines in politics and religion were anxious to make their own lives distinguished for 'elegance' and sophistication. They had to be different from the respectable bourgeois *i. e.*, whose habits they disliked and whose growing powers they feared. But the aristocracy were no longer a genuine class at all ; they were a hand-over from an earlier order and had lost their integrity and function in society ; the real rulers of which were coming to be a plutocracy embracing the old upper and the middle-classes. So the attempt to produce a new aristocratic literature failed conspicuously...The society Congreve (1670-1729) paints is already passing away ; wit and gallantry and cynical irony have become literary fashions and the world described becomes an ideal world—it is, in a way, a wish-fulfilment-world for the wits of time..."

One has no sooner mentioned a bourgeois ascendancy over



literature and society that emerged in the eighteenth century than another aspect of the contemporary scene presents itself. Was not the aristocratic principle still dominant? Parliament was controlled by the aristocratic land-owners, the government was oligarchic, and not in any real sense democratic, the bourgeoisie had no political power. In a sense it is true that the aristocratic principle was dominant in the eighteenth century. But there was no firm line drawn between the middle and upper classes. The ruling class was not a permanently fixed body, but flexible and ever changing. There was no aristocracy of blood but only of social and political power. Aristocratic sentiment was still very strong: aristocratic forms were kept up, but behind everything lay the "cash nexus." Further, it must be remembered that bourgeoisie were quite willing to leave the purely political power in the hands of an oligarchy provided they were guaranteed freedom and security to carry on their economic activities...In literature the power of the bourgeoisie can be seen more simply and more directly. The periodical essay, the novel, the moralising and didactic verse of the middle of the century...the domestic drama of George Lillo and Edward Moore, the comedy of Goldsmith and Sheridan and the Sentimental drama of their dull contemporaries are all, in different ways, expressions of the bourgeois outlook. Sheridan, perhaps with his drawing-room wit and irony preserves as much of the aristocratic as of the middle-class tradition, but such philosophy as there is at the basis of his work, consists in a vaguely optimistic trust in human nature guaranteeing its own morality which is another side of the bourgeois doctrine of *laissez-faire*."

## 2. Life of Sheridan

The Rev. Hon. Richard Brinsley Sheridan—to give the full honourable title to the dramatist who is affectionately known as 'Sheridan',—was born in the year 1751, in Dublin. He came of a stock which on both sides claimed genius. On his father's side, his grand-father, Dr. Sheridan, was the friend and instructor of Dean Swift, had classical attainments, and was noted for a "ready wit and flow of humour, so that it was impossible for any, even the most splenetic man, not to be cheerful in his company." He was not a fortunate man nor was he careful. Sheridan's father, Thomas, the third son of Dr. Sheridan was distinguished as an actor, as a teacher of elocution and as an

author of a pronouncing dictionary. His mother was an author of no mean merit and wrote the plays, "The Dupe" and "The Discovery" and "Nourjahad," a novel. At the age of seven, he was placed, with his brother, under Mr. Samuel Whyte of Dublin for tuition, who was told by the mother that both were "impenetrable dunces." In 1762, when the parents settled down in England, Harrow was selected as the place for education, and it was here that he began to distinguish himself, for according to Dr. Parr, "he was a great reader of English poetry." In after life, he was given to classical reading and was well acquainted with the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes.

At Harrow, he became a friend of Mr. Halhed, a fellow pupil, and both of them wrote jointly a farce in three acts, called "Jupiter," but it was never brought before the public, and we have nothing but extracts from this preserved for us by Moore. Another joint production was a translation of a little known Greek author, Aristacnatus, into English verse. There was a variation in metres employed by these young aspirants to literary fame. Here again, they did not impress the world, for one of the reviewers remarked "we have been idly employed in reading it, and our readers will in proportion lose their time in perusing this article."

Mr. Thomas Sheridan's shifting to Bath to fulfil theatrical engagements elsewhere in the year 1771 was an event in the life of the young Richard. It was unfortunate for a young man to be thrown into such an entirely artificial society, which was composed of indolent and selfish aristocrats, and was noted more as a place of fashion than of culture. Bilious East Indians, Irish fortune-hunters, gouty statesmen, ladies of rank, 'chiefly remarkable for the delicacy of their reputation,' went there to seek relief from *ennui* and monotony. For such people, there was a theatre, which has been the nursery of the London stage, and concerts, and private parties were the ruling passion of the place. Every person made an attempt to shine in such a society and young Richard also indulged in writing poetry, in his hardly twentieth year. He had the good luck to meet people of importance, like the lively Mrs. Thrale, the pious and clever Hannah More, as well as hear the best music, and it was here that he met that most beautiful—nay, fascinating girl, Miss Linley, who was gifted both by nature and art. She was one of the most accomplished as well as beautiful women of the age and she was surrounded by a host of admirers, amongst whom



was Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Known to students of Oxford as "St. Cecilia," Sheridan succeeded where many more eminent had failed. She eloped with Sheridan at the age of 18 and was married to him, and retired from the musical world.

Sheridan was married in 1773, at the very early age of 22 and now seriously devoted himself to play-writing as a means of livelihood and in January 1775 produced the now famous farcical comedy, "The Rivals" which after first failures, with a different cast, established his reputation. This was followed by "The Duenna" in November 1775, which immediately became a favourite with the public, for it has long continued to be a favourite opera, in which his talented father-in-law assisted in the musical part. The father-in-law, however, tried further to get Garrick interested in the young man, and once Garrick began to look with favour upon Sheridan, his future was certain. For, at about this very time, Garrick had decided to retire from the stage and make the young Sheridan his successor, though others like Colman were prepared to purchase the theatre. It was a great speculation for young Sheridan, who came into possession of two-fourteenths of the Garrick's share, for it was rumoured that Sheridan lived beyond his means, that he was keeping company only with the rich and the wealthy, entertaining people on lavish scale, without any visible proof of his sources. He may have been assisted and advised by able financiers or by Garrick; it is certain that his financial difficulties grew, which ultimately brought him to a recklessness in after life. He was witty, clever, adroit, and succeeded in warding off his creditors for a very long time. And just when the theatre seemed to be suffering an eclipse as a result of Sheridan's management, there came that scintillating comedy, "The School for Scandal"—a comedy which has been acclaimed as almost challenging Moliere on his own grounds and "is hardly beaten except in a certain universality." (Saintsbury).

The drama was at once a success. Though the actors did not get their own part or portions from the manuscript till after the drama was advertised, it succeeded very well indeed. This established Sheridan once for all and from now, it was admitted by impartial critics that Sheridan was most properly fitted and qualified for the writing of comedy, in which cheerfulness and mirth, ridicule and satire, laughter at the follies and inconsistencies of fellow-beings are displayed. But all this could not help the theatre from going to dogs. Actors were not being paid

regularly. Some of them sent words almost a few hours before the actual staging of a performance that they could not play their rolls. Garrick began to get letters, which showed the distressing condition of the Drury Lane Theatre. The complaints against Sheridan were many and various. He neglected to open his letters, and sometimes, after they became a heap, he burnt them. Authors complained manuscripts getting lost, and finding sometimes their characters and plots in other performances from the Theatre. This meant that Sheridan had to silence these charges by hush money, which merely increased such charges, as the payment was sometimes liberal.

In 1788, Sheridan became still more daring by committing himself to the speculation at Drury Lane Theatre, for he purchased Mr. Lacy's interests in the theatre. "The Critic," a farce was staged on the 30th of October, and was the last dramatic work of Sheridan, for others were mere adaptations. But 'The Critic' was a bold effect aiming at persons like Cumberland as Sir Fretful Plagiary, Vaughan as Dangle, and shy hits at Woodfall. Whatever may be the case, the exposure of Sir Fretful Plagiary was so thorough and minute that no tragedy could be offered to the managers for a long time for production, for every author saw the ridicule.

But already by about 1780, Sheridan had begun to dream different dreams and to imagine of triumphs in other fields. In that year, Parliament was dissolved, and he began to make notes on political matters to the neglect of Drury Lane. It was almost impossible to manage the theatre, with Sheridan directing it financially. Payments were not made regularly, and there seemed to be no system followed in such matters. He was himself absorbed in the gaiety and brilliance of society which was itself interested in some of his brilliant qualities, like amiableness, and brilliancy of conversation. He was open to flattery, and was light-hearted, for at an early age of 29, he had achieved a brilliant reputation, had gained immense property, by a sheer stroke of bold speculation, and judging by his expenses appeared to possess enormous amounts of money. But he gave up or ignored this almost certain source of income for an uncertain and shadowy political life, which was still uncertain, and which could not be made the chief source of maintenance of the family. He merely drew money for the Drury Lane, and his interests began to languish in that concern.



It must now be admitted that Sheridan's dramatist's life came to an end with the production of 'The Critic.' He had turned his footsteps to "fresh fields and pasture new." He had definitely entered politics, for in 1780, when he made his first speech in the House against his election, the House listened with respect and silence, for he had already won a reputation elsewhere. But he was new to this art. He had yet to develop those literary graces and elegances which were later on to rank him as one of the greatest English Masters of the art of oratory, having in his speech all the requisites—great thoughts, a lively imagination, a poetic expression, a facility of ideas, and a wonderful power of language, which all helped him, in spite of the physical defect, almost like stammering, from which, indeed, he was never absolutely free. At a very young age of 29, he was not only brought in for any pocket borough, but was regularly elected by the town of Stafford, for a payment of 248 Burgesses, paid £ 5. 5s each. And though the reputation as a brilliant dramatist, as a share-holder of Drury Lane Theatre at the very young age of 25, secured without any apparent source of money, as a fashionable young man, who had seemed a very lovely bride, all procured him a quiet audience in the House, it was to no effect. It was not a great speech and Woodfall told the young man, "I am sorry to say I do not think this is your line ; you had much better have stuck to your forming pursuits." The sting went home. Sheridan, after a pressing of the head by both hands, exclaimed, "It is in me, however and by G—, it shall come out." Well, it did come out. He threw in his lot with Fox, as also with Burke, who held perhaps the highest place of esteem. Slowly he made efforts to improve his speeches, till the party understood the value of the young new member, who within two years of membership of parliament, went into office along with the Whigs after the fall of Lord North's ministry. Fluctuations of office did not hinder Sheridan from formulating his opinions and his style with great care and perseverance, writing out his speeches at first and then learning them by heart, and continuing such methods till a mere scribble on a piece of paper was enough to guide him. He also developed the skill of *repartee* and ridicule, satire and retort, which was one of his special gifts in his later career as a speaker. And thus within ten years, when Sheridan was only 39, he was chosen with Burke to lead the opposition in the impeachment of Warren Hastings.



That speech marks the peak of Sheridan's performance as an orator. He seems to have reached this apex of oratory, beyond which he never scored. It was combined with everything oratorical, as well as dramatic, like falling into the arms of Burke, as utterly exhausted. Macaulay, with the usual skill for *fanfare*, has described the whole scene and the effect of the speech upon the audience, for all time. "The charge touching the spoliation of the Begums was brought forward by Sheridan, in a speech which was so imperfectly reported that it may be said to be wholly lost, but which was, without doubt, the most elaborately brilliant of all the productions of his ingenious mind. The impression which it produced was such as has never been equalled. He sat down, not merely amidst cheering, but amidst the loud clapping of hands in which the Lords below the bar and the strangers in the gallery joined. The excitement of the House was such that no other speaker could obtain a hearing ; and the debate was adjourned. The ferment spread fast through the town. Within four and twenty hours, Sheridan was offered a thousand pounds for the copyright of the speech, if he would himself correct it for the press. This impression made by this remarkable display of eloquence on severe and experienced critics, whose discernment may be supposed to have been quickened by emulation, was deep and permanent. Mr. Windham, twenty years later, said that the speech deserved all its fame, and was, in spite of some faults of taste, such as were seldom wanting either in the literary or in the parliamentary performances of Sheridan, the finest that had been delivered within the memory of man. Mr. Fox, about the same time, being asked by the late Lord Holland which was the best speech ever made in the House of Commons, assigned the first place, without hesitation, to the great orator of Sheridan on the Oudh charge." Bruce declared it "to be the most astonishing burst of eloquence, argument and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition," while Pitt, Sheridan's great adversary, acknowledged that the speech surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and to control human mind. Even Lord Byron has acknowledged :

"When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan  
Arose to heaven in her appeal to Man,

His was the thunder, his the avenging rod,  
The wrath—the delegated voice of God,  
Which shock the nations through his life, and blazed,  
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.”

From the month of July 1788, the mental disorder of the king visibly grew, almost in an alarming manner. The hopes, thus of the party which supported the dissolute Prince of Wales, began to rise. Fox was sent far from Italy. But it was of no avail. The House resolved on the motion of Pitt, taking from the Prince of Wales any claim as a right, which he might wish to establish, of acting as regent of the kingdom, and on the 16th January, Pitt moved that it was expedient that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales should be empowered to exercise and administer the royal authority under the style and title of “regent of the kingdom,” with a series of restrictions upon his power. But soon the king recovered, and the Prince of Wales got the chance of being a regent only in 1811.

In 1788, Sheridan’s father died and next year began that great movement known as the French Revolution. It attracted many in England, including George Fox and partially Sheridan. But Burke was an inveterate opponent of such reform and revolutions and a split took place between these companions. Burke attacked violently and tears rolled down Fox’s cheeks. A meeting took place between Sheridan and Burke at Burlington House, lasting from ten o’clock at night until there in the morning, to bridge the gulf. But Burke was implacable. It was suspected by some that Sheridan had hastened this separation by imprudent speeches, to fill in the place with Fox, which Burke had enjoyed for a quarter of a century.

Soon Sheridan retired from the business of the House though he later on took occasional part. Mrs. Sheridan’s health required change of place, and she was taken to Clifton. He also hoped to rebuild Drury Lane Theatre, but he had already reached his peak of reputation and his sun was on the decline. Though the first stone of the new building was laid, a series of difficulties cropped up. Mrs. Sheridan died in 1792. She had a sort of divinity about her, and she was remarked upon as ‘a connecting link between woman and angel.’ She had a great influence upon Sheridan while living. The theatre was completed in 1794. Meanwhile his management

of the theatre was getting him in far greater difficulties. The same old story repeated—broken promises, crowds of duns, and general mismanagement! The actors—even like Kemble and Mrs. Siddons,—refused to act unless their salary was paid. But his charm of manners carried him for some more time. Professor Smyths mentions how his servant Edwards found Sheridan's window stuffed with bank-notes to stop the gaping cash! His association with the disreputable Prince of Wales, the glamour in the rank of a royal personage, all had their unfortunate effect upon him. The orgies at the Carlton House—the residence of the Prince of Wales—were always unrestrained and Mrs. Oliphant says that 'so much hope and possibility as remained in his life was lost in the vulgar dissipations of this depraved secondary court and in the poor vanity, of becoming boon companion, a 'buffoon' to the Prince. He was going headlong into ruin and at just such a time, when he was forty-four years of age, he entered into marriage with the daughter of the Dean of Winchester, whose condition was that Sheridan should settle fifteen thousand pounds upon her. Well, he was able to overcome even this difficulty. He continued to lead his political life by fits, making only occasional appearance in the House and getting not much for his support of his royal friend's cause. And the last stroke of evil fortune came in 1809, when the newly built Drury Lane Theatre was on fire. And when found drinking in a nearby coffee-house, he remarked with a melancholy humour, "surely a man may be allowed to take a glass of wine by his own fireside!"

He had seven more years to live, for he died on 7th July, 1816. But these were not happy years at all. He got rid of the burnt Theatre and his rights for £ 24,000, his son receiving £ 12,000. But this was utterly inadequate for a person, accustomed to Sheridan's lavish scale of life. He made demands upon Whitebread, arranged for the sale of the rights of the burnt Drury Lane, which were answered in a cold, businesslike manner, with reminders of the payments made, and the pledges to be met. And at about this very time, he lost his seat in the Parliament, which meant that immunity from arrest for debt as an M. P. was gone. But his prestige had vanished, his power dead. He was actually arrested and imprisoned in a sponging-house for two or three-days, which broke him. Though he tried to appear as if he planned something new, still it was a clear blind. "Writs and executions



came in rapid succession," and at the time of his death, the house he lived in was a desecrated place in the possession of bailiffs. After his death, "two royal highnesses, half the dukes and earls and barons of the peerage followed him" to Westminster Abbey.

### 3. Sheridan As A dramatist

The place Sheridan occupies as a dramatist depends partially upon the unique poetry of English drama in the eighteenth century. It seems that after the burst of dramatic literature in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and the second birth in the time of the Restoration, the dramatic genius of the English race was either anxious for a rest or was exhausted. This form of literature had been popular in England for about one hundred and fifty years, and faded as suddenly as it had flashed. Yet it had ever prospered at the closing of the theatres, and after the Restoration, the profits from drama were steadily increasing. Whether greater social attractions interfered with the enjoyments of the English, or whether with the birth of the new-born periodicals and essays, the Englishman became more a parlour-man and a stay-at-home, immured in the walls of his home which is proverbially the Englishman's castle,—whether any of these were the cause or if so, to what extent, we cannot judge. But the fact is glaring that only two dramatists wrote and even these were not entirely and professionally dramatists. Goldsmith was a literary jack-of-all-trades, who touched every form of literature and adorned it. Sheridan was mainly a social figure, with a Parliamentary position, which gave him a prominence—or eminence, which the drama could never have brought him. And then, perhaps the drama was not his *forte*. Besides, the type of Shakespearean tragedy could not have proposed in this "age of prose and reason," "of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century." Tragedy requires something of an unnatural or a superhuman effort; and even a domestic tragedy requires an occasional hitching of our literary waggon to the star. Comedy is more tame and more matter of fact, and even this type was required to change its subject, to suit the changed needs and tastes of the period. The age of heroism and of its national pride was gone with the death of Elizabeth. A hero like Cromwell who almost resembled Shakespeare's tragic heroes, was more held in awe than in love, and people preferred to lapse back into their everyday life and easy morals,

during the Restoration. So when Sheridan came to write the dramas, he had not the inspiration of Shakespeare to guide, for Shakespeare's dramas were acted in a mutilated, altered form, so much as to give a happy ending to *Lear*! And this crime was committed by no less a man than Garrick himself, who placated the taste of the audience. Hence in Sheridan's time his models were his immediate predecessors, who supplied him with what is called domestic comedy. Actually, it starts with Goldsmith and Sheridan, but the seeds of its existence are seen germinating earlier. Before him, dramas like Colman's '*Clandestine Marriage*' (1776), Hume Kelly's '*False Delicacy*,' Fielding's '*Tom Thumb*,' Mrs. Cowley's '*The Belle's Statagem*' and Macklin's '*Man of the World*' had been on the stage, sometimes successfully.

It is against this background that Sheridan has to be judged. And we then find that in a peculiarly poor period of dramatic production, his is really a brilliant piece, full of pep, satire, exposure of the vices of society, a wonderful picture of the scandalous, debaucherous society which he knew to the last detail, with its scheming maids and servants, and its hypocritical and snobbish masters and ladies. The success of such a piece depends as much upon the theme or the plot, as upon the other artistic excellences. And the plots of Sheridan were taken from everyday life, almost picked up from that peculiar society in which he lived, moved and had his being,—the society of the Prince of Wales and Fox. He was a spoilt child of such a society, fondled and favoured by it and after his first success in '*The Rivals*,' almost leonised by it. Thus his dramas were bound to appeal to such a society wanting thrills and excitements, sensations and scandals. But his greatness does not lie in his giving the audience what it wants. It lies in his giving us a wonderfully accurate picture of that society, sketched not in mere ink, but almost in indelible ink. And in this, he uses all those powers of literary excellence which he later on was to utilise for parliamentary purpose. There is irony and satire, used in a delicate manner. There is wit, beautiful conversation, repartee and the dialogue is brilliant in its consistency of character.

The three pieces that are still remembered from the small number of Sheridan's plays, are "*The Rivals*," "*The School for Scandal*," and "*The Critic*." Each is of a type. While '*The Rivals*' is a good deal farcical and sentimental, '*The School*



for Scandal' follows the time-spirit of comedy as is generally to be found, and the third, 'The Critic' is a farce—pure and simple. As a writer of such pieces, Sheridan's place is safe and secure, but it cannot be a very high place, because of paucity of production. One wonders whether, if he had not devoted himself to parliamentary activities and applied himself to drama, he would have been able to achieve greater eminence. He lacked the application and perhaps he lacked the full genius. He was not essentially, nor professionally, a man of letters. And the highest praise that can be given him is that he along with Goldsmith helped to create sparkling laughter which was not vicious, in an age where this was a rarity.

#### 4. The English Comedy from the Time of Shakespeare

The English drama had made a wonderful progress from the time of Shakespeare. He, however, was not the only dramatist of significance. Ben Jonson, his contemporary, was at least for a period quite an influential competitor, and there were others who were supposed to have collaborated with Shakespeare, like Beaumont and Fletcher. However, the sort of tradition both in tragedy and comedy, as started by Shakespeare could not be continued with the same force and genius, though some of his successors were able to achieve some element of prominence in one or other of the two major divisions of dramatic art. *Beaumont and Fletcher*—the two are almost as inseparable as the classical pair of friends, Damon and Pythias!—continued Shakespeare's romantic treatment of tragedy and comedy, slightly more romantic in the sense of looser construction, and great freedom in treatment, with a general laxity in total impression. They continued to be the most popular of all English dramatists—not excluding Shakespeare himself!—and their plays survived the Restoration. This was partly due to a slightly greater degradation of moral or ethical standard, since that must have been one of the major attractions for the rakes and the *roues* of the Restoration. But there certainly was a great stage-craft also, and a sort of charm and felicity in diction and poetry, for a dramatic literature that could last over such a long period must have some intrinsic artistic merits too. As a matter of fact, these two persons have been so permanently linked with Shakespeare's name, which must have been due to close professional association, as well as the influence of the Master's hand in their writing. Specially in the songs, they approach sometimes the lyrical excellence of Shakespeare himself. The most



important of their dramatic works are—*The Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and the greatest favourite of all lovers of literature, *The Faithful Shepherdess*. *Chapman* shows something of Marlowe's 'heroic' style, so typical in *Tamburlaine*, but *Chapman* was also capable of a bit of comedy too. *Dekker* is greater in dramatic skill and genius, and superior to practically all the other writers in poetical content of his drama as well as in the dramatic skill. He experimented in all types of drama—farce, romantic and fanciful drama, etc. *Saintsbury* ranks him very high and says that in the matter of felicity of conception and power of execution, he has what the greatest dramatists might be proud of. His important dramas are *Old Fortunatus*, *Patient Grissil*, and *The Honest Whore*. *Heywood* is better known as a writer of vast number of masques and pageants, but he is also responsible for making attempts at popularising a comedy of London manners and humours, as also the domestic drama, which was to be the foundation of the whole structure of the later dramatic productions for a long period. However, Lamb's tribute that is a sort of 'prose' Shakespeare is too extravagant to be taken seriously, as it seems to be a case of love which rarely discriminates, since love is blind, in literature as much as in life.

On the other hand, Ben Jonson, the champion of the classical comedy seems to have rowed a lovely plough so far as his method is concerned. A very great classical scholar, it is no wonder that he placed classics over everything else—even over public taste. As a matter of fact, it is a tribute to his genius that he was able to make the public appreciate classical treatment and make it popular though it could not take root as a method—for some time. It was always an artificial approach to literature, however much it may have the support of the classics. The net result was that it never could be incorporated in English dramatic literature, though it was attempted by some writers during the Restoration. The Restoration, however, was a thoroughly artificial life, and it was but normal that anything which was artificial should flourish during this period. Milton died towards the start of this period, while Dryden lived in the heyday of this literary epoch. The closing of the theatres and the lack of support during the time of the Protectorate almost broke that continuity of inspiration which is necessary to keep up a tradition. We have no dramatists during this period till we come to Dryden, the

greatest of the Augustans. He was a genius, fallen upon evil times and tastes, and unfortunately contributing to what the age liked, though he was great enough and a genius enough to appreciate beauty wherever he could find, even in Chaucer! He started writing the 'Heroic Dramas,' which became such a vogue and a fashion that Buckingham said that "for ten years we have listened to rhyme and not to reason." The phrase 'Heroic Dramas' is applicable mostly to tragedies, for it was here then the true 'Heroic' nature of the type appeared. The characters were heroes who indulged in a broad-side of rant and bombast, unprecedented in English literature for the vehemence of expression, though foreshadowed at the very beginning of English drama in *Christopher Marlowe*. Besides the heroic couplets became the sole vehicle of poetic and dramatic expression, as a successor to the Blank Verse which had so degenerated in incompetent hands that it had become all blank and no verse. Dryden's contributions in the field of comedy were 'The Wild Gallant,' the comic portion of the tragi-comic 'Maiden Queen,' 'The Mock Astrologer,' 'Marriage a la Mode' and 'The Amphytrion.' But he could not shine in comedy as he did in tragedy where he set his stamp upon a type. In comedy he was merely mixing up the different types into incoherent product. The sharp bitterness of satire, of criticism, the exposure of manners as well as of humours which we find after him in the Restoration dramatists, as we find before him in Jonson, could not be seen in him. He was too noble, unless bitterly stirred, as in 'Macflecknoe' and 'Absalom and Achitophel' but the appearance of coarseness which somehow appears to be almost an essential feature of comedy in general, seems to increase in him; and readers find it in shocking proportion in the successors.

The genteel comedy of the people who followed Dryden in the Restoration and later on for a period, was the dominating type for over 40 years, though in subject-matter, as well as in treatment, it slowly changed its shape. The five most important comedy-writers of Restoration are *Etherege*, *Wycherley*, *Congreve*, *Vanbrugh* and last, *Farquhar*. *Etherege* shares the Restoration comedy, and in its very birth, one can see the dominating features of this type. It was a definite representation of the manners of the time—it was the Comedy of Manners—but the manners were of the porfligate age, with Charles II ruling and with French influence at the court. "Historically," says Prof.



Schelling, "Etherege assumes importance when we consider that he determined the whole species of comedy which persistently held the stage ; though Wycherley, Congreve and Vanbrugh down to very late times, increasingly more divergent from actual life. Etherege copied the life he knew, his successors copied Etherege. This type is also the genteel comedy mentioned by Saintsbury, 'airy' and 'malicious,' finding pleasure in suggestions and innuendoes which definitely are obscene, where the pleasure was not in talk as talk, or conversation, but in the wit utilised in such a manner as to create laughter by obscene and mischievous suggestions. However, this type was a reflection of the court, where everybody attempted to out-shine the other by brilliancy of talk—though sometimes from behind the Chinese fans or from under a masked countenance—which attempted sheer verbal wit. It was the type which amply justified Meredith's idea of comedy in one respect, that comedy is produced when the two sexes intermixed, and they intermixed in a pretty loud manner in the court at that time. Etherege therefore gets credit for making the pleasure of his comedies rest primarily on the wit displayed and this will soon be the main attraction of the Restoration Comedy. Licentiousness of speech and sometimes even of action, dissipated rakes running after innocent ladies to spoil them, or in the absence of such ladies, pleasing themselves with "the young women of the town," leading a life of debauchery and immorality which does not seem to think in terms of its relation to actual facts of everyday life—this was what made Restoration Comedy a new type, and a type by itself.

Etherege's plays—*Love in a Tub*, *She Would if She Could*, and *The Man of Mode or Fopling Flutter* show a rising art and in the last, in *Dorimant*, we have almost a character from life, who was perhaps modelled upon Rochester, or upon Etherege himself, while Sir Fopling Flutter and Madley were pictures of individuals. However that may be, we have a bit of realism and manners in this writer, and he is thus historically important.

Wycherley's reputation was quite a deal in his time. His comedies are less flimsy in structure and show a greater sureness of touch. The important comedies are *The Plain Dealer* (1674), *The Gentleman, Dancing Master* and *The Country Wife*. He copied or took his models sometimes plagiarised, for his *Dancing Master* is from Calderon and the *Country Wife* from Moliere. Though not as well written as Etherege's, he improved upon the profligate of the former and produced profligates,



coxcombs, rakes and the gentlemen of the town in ever-rising degree of coarseness and brutality. In his own days, it was said about him :

“The satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherley.”

“His comedies show a great power of wit, and says Saintsbury, “*The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer* are simply the strongest and wittiest plays of the comic kind produced in England between Fletcher and Congreve, that is to say, for more than sixty years.” But the coarseness was almost unbearable. He is able to give us a few types, and sometime a few individual characters, and most important of all, he was able to manage his sparkling dialogue and repartee surprisingly well.

The next most important figure—the crowning figure of this dramatic age—is Congreve, who began the great artificial comedy of this age. This most conspicuous, but non-literary, feature of this type is the complete lack of morals and decency for in these comedies “faithlessness” becomes “a distinction” and brutality “an order of merit.” There is no special merit in the plot or composition, but the whole beauty, merit, lustre of this type—its chief claim to be recognised as a type of comedy—is the wonderful quality of the wit and dialogue,—a wit and a dialogue almost unprecedented and perhaps unsurpassed in the whole field of English Literature, in their own type. Charles Lamb has defended this form of comedy in his essay “On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century” in which he blames us for not being able to detach ourselves from our everyday life, and enjoy this artificial *dramatic* life with no reference to reality, “we carry out fire-side concerns to the theatre with us. We do not get thither, like our ancestors, to escape from the pressure of reality, so much as to confirm our experience of it : to make assurance double, and take a bond of fate. We must live our toilsome lives twice over, as it was the mournful privilege of Ulysses to descend twice to the shades. All that natural ground of character, which stood between vice and virtue : or which in fact was indifferent to neither, where neither properly was called in question ; that happy breathing-place from the burthen of a perpetual moral questioning—the sanctuary and quiet Alsatia of hunted casuistry—is broken up and dis-enfranchised, as injurious to the interests of society.....We dare not dally with

images, or names, of wrong. We bark like foolish dogs at shadows. We dread infection from the scenic representation of disorder, and fear a painted pustule. In our anxiety that our morality should not take cold, we wrap it up in a great blanket surtout of precaution against the breeze of sun-shine."

This is only a defence but cannot be admitted. The word the dramatic comedy of the period represented was a true picture of life—was not merely imaginative as a dream phantasy. It was a true, sometimes exaggerated, distorted picture, but it was to a very great deal based upon the real social life of the aristocracy of the period. It cannot be defended for its offending immorality or vulgarity, and the less efforts are made to offer an explanation, the better. Not only it was coarse and vulgar ; but it indicated a great pleasure, a gusto in this type of life which was painted with a relish and a smacking of lips. It was not sheer vulgarity as the Greeks had in their Aristophanic dramas. It was vulgarity made tempting and secretly enjoyable.

But this type had good points too. The brilliancy of dialogue of the characters, the verbal salvo as Saintsbury beautifully calls it, is the most distinguishing literary merit of the type. Besides, some of the characters have become real symbols of the comic spirit, which is specially the case with Congreve's characters. Millamant of "The Way of the World" is such a one.

Congreve thus has played a significant role in putting the type on a firm footing. Each of the important characters of the comedies is a sure touch and a triumph. There is not always a great deal of mirth, but certainly a bar of merriment and laughter which is the result of so many factors,—like obscenity, mischievous remarks, suggestive ideas, as well as wit and puns. And what is far more important, in his case alone, as in the case of no other contemporary comic dramatist, do we find a successful portrayal of character—almost a gallery of portraits not noble in character, but certainly attractive and charming to a great extent, and almost completely realistic. It is for this that Prof. Schelling speaks of them enthusiastically. "The comedies of Congreve are of a literary excellence that overtops not only the comedies of their own age, but in their quality, all his imitators. There is no parallel in English to the directness, incisiveness, brilliancy and ease of his stage-dialogue. And his personages, however they belong to the accepted categories of fops, gallants and ladies of fashion and intrigue, are conceived

and executed with an air and distinction that raises them as much above their fellows of Etherege, Wycherley or Vanbrugh as Congreve himself excelled in the company he so loved.' Mr. Archer sums up correctly about Congreve's art when he says, "that it is a picture of society observed from a standard of complete moral difference," but this only admits that it was after all based upon life itself.

Vanbrugh was not always successful in what he achieved or wrote and certainly wrote with either less of conscience, or less of artistic sense. And yet, even he was sometimes able to match Congreve, when he produces *Lord Foppington*, while his *Sir John Brute* has been a character liked and praised. There is a great deal of stage-life in the comedies, but also a great amount of coarseness and lack of gentility. His best comedy is *The Confederacy* though *The Provoked Wife* is also worthy of appreciation and perusal. Farquhar, the younger, is noted more for his *The Beaux—Statagem, the Recruiting Officer*. There is greater liveliness and sincerity in the scenes presented and the *Beaux—Statagem* is the least objectionable of his plays. There is, however, an absence of that biting satire which seems to have inspired Congreve, for his dramas are good-natured.

The next important type of comedy which was born but a bit late was the Sentimental Comedy. But Farquhar's last distinctive work was written in 1707, while Goldsmith's *The Good Natured Man* was produced in 1768. During the period, a large amount of plays was written, but it is an amazing fact that none of the writers come up to any standard or rose to any eminence till we reach Goldsmith. He and Sheridan are the twin sharers of the dramatic fragment. They wrote a form which has been called the Sentimental Comedy or Comedy of Sentiment, from the idea that an attempt is made to present sentiments in their true colours, *i.e.*, virtue and vice as they are. Richard Steele, the progenitor of this style, in his comedies, *The Funeral* (1701) as also in *The Tender Husband* (1705) started violently to preach against the stage immortality of the Restoration Comedy. He practised in drama what he preached in his essays, which were sometimes lachrymose, and the result was that, though this was definitely a whiff of fresh and invigorating air, it tended to be more of a sermon, as was hinted by Fielding. But he served as a pioneer, and is responsible for having partially supplied the models for the later dramatists like Goldsmith and Sheridan to perfect. In Goldsmith, therefore,



we find admirable construction and some good characters and it was a good thing, though Garrick was not convinced of its worth, and staged it only after a threat. But in the next—and alas!—the last of Goldsmith's comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, the author reaches a peak of excellence, with no pretences and false glamour, no coarseness to aid his comedy, but a benevolent and bright presentation of life, along with grace and careful dialogues, a beauty of languages which is not due to any verbal fireworks, but is natural and easy of flow, things which make it a thing such as the English stage had not seen since it was reopened after the Restoration. There was no cheap sentimentality of Steele, but simple presentation of the beauty or nobility of life, drawn by a man who was himself an emblem of these. And this was such a noble contrast to the vicious picture of rakes and *roues* that it was no wonder that the public has remained grateful to Goldsmith for such a vision of life, after so many years of shocking coarseness on the stage.

Sheridan is the next important figure, and we shall discuss him separately. But it may be remembered that the drama as a literary and an acting type combined is found for the last time in Sheridan till almost the end of the nineteenth century. There is almost a complete blank of dramatic art during this period, till we come to Oscar Wilde, Shaw, Galsworthy etc.

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**SPECIAL INTRODUCTION  
TO  
SHERIDAN'S  
THE RIVALS**





## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

### (1) Occasion, Date of Composition and Production and Popularity.

Directly after his marriage with the beautiful daughter of the musician Linley, Sheridan came over to London and set-up house in the most fashionable quarter. When he found his expenses exceeding his means, he thought of play-writing for the stage to support his extravagant existence. About this time, Mr. Harris, the Manager of the Covent Garden Theatre requested Sheridan to write one. He hurriedly responded to the call and informed his father-in-law in November 1774 about the composition of 'The Rivals' when he was barely 23.

When the play was first performed at the Covent Garden Theatre on January 17, 1775, it was a dismal failure. Critics and the more vocal portion of the audience expressed their displeasure in no uncertain terms. They pointed out to its many blemishes viz., inordinate length, exuberance of sentiment in the long-drawn-out sentimental episode of Julia and Falkland etc. although one of the journals had to admit "marks of the man of genius, the gentleman and the scholar" even in the very imperfections. Any way his first play made a bad start and Sheridan had to withdraw it for further revision. Its failure on the stage was also due to the bad acting by many players. The worst offender was Lee who acted Sir Lucius O'Trigger. In the revised form of the play, much of the Julia Falkland episode was curtailed and other minor alternations were carried out. When the play was staged eleven days after its first appearance, it was pronounced as a great success and since then has had a lasting stage career. At that time it enjoyed a run for fifteen consecutive nights at a stretch—a phenomenon which had rarely fallen to the lot of any post-Restoration dramatist since the days of Congreve eighty years ago. With Sheridan, comedy seemed to regain the shining beauty of form with the ease of movement so characteristic of Congreve. It leaped in to fame with the more vocal and intellectual section of the audience who saw in it the rebirth of the true comic spirit. The drama in vogue was called the "Sentimental Comedy" in which

in place of laughter there were tears ; in place of intrigue melodramatic and distressing situations ; in place of rogues and gallants and witty damsels, pathetic heroes and serious lovers and honest servants. "The Rivals" with its clear plot, captivating stage-situations, managed with agile, wit and fun, and its joyous representation of amusing humours of typical characters was just the type of drama sought for so long by a discerning audience. Sheridan also showed the eighteenth century that immorality is not an essential ingredient of the comic drama.

The light treatment of the surfaces of life was also a distinct advantage which made for the popularity of Sheridan as a dramatist with the average theatre-goer of those days who did not like to be weighed down by scenes of pathos and pious sentiment or be edified by moralisings through the comic drama. "The Rivals" became instantly popular because of its sparkling dialogue, its spirit of unalloyed fun and light-hearted laughter and satiric presentation of life. "The Rivals" is, indeed, a miracle as a first play. It is admittedly one of the most diverting comedies on the stage. Although it may not hold the attention of readers but on the stage it is very effective. Critics who represent the Falkland-Julia episode to be a great stumbling-block in the way of its appreciation, should realise that in writing these scenes, Sheridan was not making a concession but framing an indictment and a burlesque in the same manner as some of the scenes in "The Critic."

## (2) Sources : How far they affect the Originality of Sheridan—the Autobiographical Element.

A charge of plagiarism has been brought against Sheridan for (1) the material of the main plot ; (2) the background of the play which is derived from his knowledge of the gay life of the idle rich in the fashionable town of Bath, and (3) the characters, situations and main incidents.

Let us now examine how far this charge is true and whether these borrowings detract from his credit for originality in the treatment of his sources. There are some elements of truth in the charge as set out above, as Sheridan himself admits in the preface : "Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams ; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted." Sheridan admits his indebtedness to his predecessors—the earlier dramatists, novelists, for his stock charac-

ters, incidents and situations. Even the greatest of dramatists, Shakespeare, borrowed the story of his plays from all possible sources. In writing stage-plays, Shakespeare's first concern was to get hold of a story that might be shaped to the requirements of the theatre. He borrowed his stories from all possible sources and then proceeded to breathe life into characters, which generally lay lifeless in the originals. His genius in plot-construction lay in fusing his source materials into an organic and artistic whole and in the vitality of his characters. Likewise, Sheridan has no doubt gathered his materials from different sources but he has very skilfully interwoven his materials by artistic syntheses in such a way as to produce the impression of a harmonious whole.

(a) *The Material of the Main Plot*—Certain aspects of the main plot run parallel to the life of Sheridan himself. This is no fault. Personal experience is the basis of all real literature. A great book grows directly out of life and is fundamentally an expression of the personal experiences of the author, the things that make up the sum-total of his private life—outer and inner. What are these significant personal experiences of Sheridan for which we find parallels in his 'Rivals'? In the first place, the romantic love between Lydia and Captain Absolute is derived from the love-affair of Sheridan and Miss Elizabeth Linley, the beautiful daughter of the musician, Linley, in rescuing whom from the attentions of an unwelcome admirer, Sheridan eloped with her and subsequently married her after fighting two duels on her behalf. Secondly, the heroine of the play, Lydia Languish, has a craze for elopement. This is derived from Miss Linley's romantic idea of fleeing to France along with her lover to take shelter in a Convent. Lydia also dreamt of a secret marriage away from Bath after her elopement with Ensign Beverley (Captain Absolute). Miss Linley however followed up her elopement with a secret marriage with Sheridan at Calais. Directly after their return, Sheridan had to fight two duels with a married rake, one Captain Matthews at Bath where the couple intended to settle. Sheridan was severely wounded in his second duel with Matthews. It is said that the conduct of Matthews in the first duel was such as "would have done credit to Bob Acres." Again the character of Sir Anthony Absolute—the typical self-willed authoritative father of the old conservative school—seems to have been modelled on that of Sheridan's father in



many respects. He is the very prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute, particularly hard upon his son, as he could never reconcile himself to Sheridan's marriage with Linley, though his father-in-law subsequently made up matters with his son-in-law. Another fact of Sheridan's life might have led him to put into Lydia's mouth incidental remark: "I have heard of girls persecuted as I am who have appealed on behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival." (Act III, Sc. III). Here the reference is perhaps to the fact that an elderly gentleman, one Mr. Long, had actually given up his suit in response to the girl's appeal to his generosity and bequeathed a sum of £ 3000 on her.

(b) *The Background* or the *Milieu i. e.*, the setting or the totality of the surroundings—physical and social environment—political and social conditions and the like, represented by the gay life of the rich people of Bath, grew out of Sheridan's personal experience of his day-to-day life in that city, where he lived with his father, who kept a School of Oratory in 1770. The play is full of references to places of importance in that pleasure-resort. This shows that Sheridan was thoroughly acquainted with the topography of the place. The play is a valuable social document in that it presents a picture of the eighteenth century life in the city of Bath. It presents, as all good literature should, the picture of a life larger, richer and more varied than we ourselves can ever know of by our own individual efforts, through the idealized creations of the imagination of a literary artist. It carries us beyond the meagre humanity of our everyday round of existence into contact with those fresh, strong and magnetic personalities who have embodied themselves in the world's best works of literary art. It thus lifts us from the particular to the universal the eternal varieties of the human race. The particular and specific references to places of importance in the city of Bath give a realistic touch to the play, which constitutes a source of strength to the human document, presenting a picture of the life of intrigue, duelling, elopement and escapades. Sheridan has acted virtually as a historian of fashionable folly in capturing for all time the life and manners of a by-gone age. The fact that he has specifically mentioned important places in the town also shows his knowledge of the topography of the place.

(c) *Character, Situation and Incidents*—Sheridan freely drew upon the stock-characters of the type already intro-

duced by the earlier masters of the Restoration Comedy of Manners, which evolves out of the Jonsonian "humour" comedy. Ben Jonson's art was to make a foible or whim the predominant trait which is calculated to divert the action of its subject into courses which excite our mirth or laughter. Jonson's influence was commanding in his own day and has continued down to present. His "Humour" comedy gave rise to the Restoration Comedy of Manners. All realistic comedy owed the influence of Jonson's comedy of "Humours" and reminiscences of its most effective scenes and types of character found their way into every kind of drama. In the noblest of his plays, dominant passions such as lust, hunger for gold, jealousy, egoism, vulgar ambition, etc.—tower above the undergrowth of "Humours."

In the Comedy of Manners, we are concerned not with natural foibles and idiosyncracies as in Ben Jonson but with the social affectations and conventions of an artificial society, although the satirical spirit of Ben Jonson is common to both. The main object of the Comedy of Manners is to make a satirical display of the fashionable life of the time. Nevertheless the line of demarcation between the Comedy of Manners and the comedy of "Humours" is none too clear. It consists partly in a difference in stage-craft rather than a difference of outlook, in a greater vivacity of rendering rather than a variation in profundity. Restoration Comedy was much lighter in the handling of personalities altogether more deft, than the comedy of "Humours." Whereas the latter searched out and displayed the hidden recesses of human passions and desires, the Comedy of Manners showed that these passions and desires were by no means confined in hidden recesses, but might be encountered daily in social intercourse. Finally, the comedy of "Humours" was only more profound in that it appealed to some supposedly absolute standard of morality, while the Comedy of Manners took for its norm the standard of the time.

That Sheridan's plays partake of the characteristics of both the types of comedies *viz.*, the Jonsonian 'Humour' comedy and the Restoration Comedy of Manners, can be seen from his characters *viz.*, (1) the type of the dictatorial and uncompromising father of "absolute" temper in Sir Anthony Absolute as against his astute young son (Captain Absolute) with a prudent and worldly-wise outlook on life; (2) Lydia Languish is the type of romance-reading spoilt child of fortune "languishing"



with her sentimental conception of love; (3) Falkland is the type of the hero of a sentimental drama so familiar and common in contemporary comedy; (4) Sir Lucius O' Trigger, with his fingers poised at the trigger of his revolver to shoot his rival in love is the typical Irish adventurer out to mend his fortune by marrying some rich girl of Bath; (5) Mrs. Malaprop is the typical old aunt and husband-hunting woman, jealous in her guard over her niece, making herself laughable by her muddle-headed, misuse of learned words; (6) Bob Acres is the type of true-born English country-gentleman aspiring to be a city beau by using city-fashions; (7) The four minor characters are again typical impertinent servants poking their nose into the affairs of their masters and betraying them to gain their own selfish ends. All these are stock-characters of comedy for whose ancestry we have to go back to their classical masters. They are also pretty common in contemporary Comedies of Manners. The parallelisms and contrasts are employed for the purposes of burlesque viz., satiric presentation of life in its manifold aspects with the object of making fun of the characters, follies, their ways of life, their follies and foibles.

In the manipulation of situations also, Sheridan follows conventional and traditional lines. We have already seen that in both plot and characterisation, he follows the familiar theatrical types. So cleverly does Sheridan manipulate his characters that they are placed in situations or circumstances which drive them into a set channel or groove of action rather than help a natural evolution and development of characters. Sheridan is no good at inventing plots, not being a regular student of the drama. His plays do not show that he expended a lot of labour or ingenuity in devising his plots. But he had the quickest eye for a situation discharging itself into a set channel of action and he knew the value of a climax, although his characters were types rather than individuals, automatons whose behaviour under a set channel of action we can always predict. A few examples will illustrate how the situations run on conventional lines e. g., (1) secretive lovers rebelling against their parents and carrying on their love-affairs in defiance of their guardians; (2) The authoritative father of the old conservative school who will listen to no reason or argument from his son but will force him to marry the girl of his own choice; (3) the type of the old widow trying desperately to live up to the elegant standards by her muddle-headed misuse of learned words, intercepting love-



letters of her ward and fancying herself to be charming enough to attract husbands ; (2) The type of the capricious and over-sensitive lover, doubting the sincerity of his beloved. All these point to stock-situations in Restoration Comedy. Sheridan did not want to invent situations of his own. He borrowed them from contemporary comedy. He showed his masterly art in developing the action of his plays through a number of striking situations which he could use to his advantage and purpose.

Sheridan's borrowings in respect of characters may now be discussed. We can trace the ancestry of Mrs. Malaprop (the very name suggests that the lady is "out of place" in her use of words) to Shakespeare's Dogberry who commits the most violent outrages on language and his legal and verbal blunders are simply delicious. Both the characters occupy a prominent place in the portrait-gallery of comic characters in world-literature. Mrs. Malaprop has also been indentified with a similar character in Fielding's "Joseph Andrews" viz., Mrs. Slipslop—a curious compound of ignorance, vulgarity and vanity which constituted "the Slipslop mind." Such comical misapplication of words is found in Shakespeare and Cervantes and Fielding himself had already furnished instances of it in 'Shamela.' Mrs. Slipslop is the most notable early example of a ridiculously deranged vocabulary. In this respect, she is undoubtedly the precursor of Smollett's Tabitha Bramble in his "Humphrey Clinker" and of Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop—and of Mrs. Hiedelberg in Colman and Garrik's comedy, "The Clandestine Marriage" and of Mrs. Tryfort in Sheridan's mother's play "A Journey to Bath." Most of all, it is certain that Sheridan borrowed from his mother's play. Biddy Tipkin in Steele's "Tender Husband" is another character similar to Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop. Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker" offers two parallel characters viz., Matthews Bramble and Lydia Bramble similar to Captain Absolute and Lydia Languish. It has been suggested that Sheridan took the name of his heroine from Lydia Bramble.

A situation similar to that described in Falkland-Julia episode is to be found in a ballad entitled 'Nutbrown Maid' in Percy's collections of ballads in his 'Reliques.' There is also a similar situation in Smollett's 'Peregrine Pickle.' It has been suggested that the attempts of the foolish country-squire, Bob Acres, to get up correctly the steps in intricate French dances are similar to the efforts of Mockmode in Farquhar's "Love and a Battle." The device adopted by the Irish adventurer.

Sir Lucius O' Trigger, to involve the unwilling Bob Acres in a duel reminds us of the trick played upon the foolish Sir Andrews in a similar duel in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." In the later play the duel is interrupted by the intervention and timely arrival of the heroine, as in 'The Rivals.'

When we examine the plot carefully, we do not notice anything unusual or extraordinary about it. The story runs on conventional lines. The characters belong to familiar theatrical types and the stock-situations run along narrow grooves. But all these borrowings or parallelisms in dramas or novels discussed above, do not detract from Sheridan's originality which consists in his constructive skill in fusing his borrowed materials into an artistic whole. The originality of Sheridan's art is shown in the way in which he has transformed these stock-characters and commonplace materials into stuff of which great comedies are made. As Balston says in his introduction to 'The Rivals,' "A work of art is not, any more than a human-being or a vegetable, a spontaneous growth, unconditioned by the time and place and circumstances of creation. It is born with a literary ancestry, and it can escape not more easily or completely from its ancestral traditions than a man from the traditions of his family. It no more detracts from Sheridan's genius to point out resemblances to Wycherley or Congreve than it would smirch the reputation of a peer to bear a likeness to the founder of his family. And even if the influence is something more than the outcome of tradition, the comparative study of literature has shown that direct borrowing, so far from being impossible has given us some of its finest passages. It required but a few touches to transform an extract from a prose translation of Plutarch into the magnificent description of the barge of Cleopatra—as Shakespearean a passage as any in the plays. With regard to Sheridan as to Shakespeare, the only legitimate question is whether he assimilated what he borrowed and in both cases the answer is unhesitating. The plays of Sheridan are throughout essentially and characteristically the work of Sheridan. Even Mrs. Malaprop whom he lifted almost bodily from his mother's unpublished play, "A Journey to Bath," has become part and parcel of his work. His real originality lies in the completeness and individuality of his work without any reference to its sources or its predecessors and individuality in works of art, as in human-beings, is seen in the strength and clearness of the impressions they make on



others. If an artist has welded his material into a complete organic whole in which nothing is superfluous or lacking, he has achieved a work of art."

*Should Sheridan's Comedy be taken as Autobiographical ?*

There are as we have seen, certain factors in the play-parts of plot, character and incidents—which bear striking resemblances to Sheridan's own life *e. g.*, (1) his secret marriage after elopement ; (2) his duels with Captain Matthews ; (3) his love-intrigues with Miss Linley ; (4) his father's disapproval of his marriage ; (5) the social life in aristocratic society of Bath was actually dominated by a vain, self-important old woman of the husband-hunting type—who thought herself charming enough to attract men and who gave herself the airs of a town-belle. All these might have been true but to say that they were actual transcripts from real life, is not true, because, although there are parallel incidents, there are many points of difference from those of Sheridan's life *e. g.*, (1) Although Sheridan might be said to have eloped with Miss Linley, Captain Absolute,—that level-headed, balanced, and sensible hero of the play—the only normal man with full possession of his five senses—does not elope with Lydia. Although he humours the romantic fancies of Lydia, he is too worldly-wise to let her elope with him, thereby losing all her fortune ; (2) The two duels in the drama—that of Acres with his rival, Beverley, and of Lucius with Captain Absolute—do not actually materialize as they did in Sheridan's life.

A work of art must grow out of life. Literature is a vital record of what the author has seen of life, when he has actually experienced it. In life itself we have to seek the sources of literature. The personal experiences of the author's private life—outer and inner—are the data of the work of art. But art is not a mere copy of reality, it is the artist's impression of reality through his fancy and imagination. It is the emotional significance of life—not its mere outer appearance that really matters in a work of art, the chief function of which is to produce through the artist's emotional experience of life, an illusion of reality. Thus it is that while drawing upon his actual experience of that part of his life, he spent at Bath. Sheridan has "created an atmosphere of almost poetical unreality" with the help of his creative imagination. The success of a comedy depends upon the dramatist's management of situations in-



vested with a peculiar piquancy of its own and the dialogue, brilliant in its phrasing and rousing in its wit and full of that rare charm that arises from the exchange of the quick repartee. All these are inventions which can never be a mere transcript from real life and which make the play not just an autobiographical piece but in true sense a work of art.

### 3. The Plot of The Rivals

Captain Jack Absolute, the son of Sir Anthony Absolute, is in love with Miss Lydia Languish, the neice of Mrs. Malaprop. But since young Lydia is a fantastically romantic girl, full of strange ideas of elopement, abduction, stolen marriage—the result of reading a great deal of such stuff—she will not marry any person unless he is prepared to marry her in as romantic a manner as she wants and not marry her for money, which is to come to her. Hence Captain Absolute pretends to be Ensign Beverley, who is not a rich man and who would run away with her to Scotland for a secret marriage. This intrigue is known to Julia, a friend of Lydia, as well as to Faulkland, a friend of Captain Jack Absolute. These two—the second pair—are also to be married, but partially for reason that Julia's father has chosen Faulkland as a suitable husband for his daughter, who, however, is a very sensible, almost patient girl, tortured by the infinite jealousy, suspicion, doubts, etc. which plague Faulkland's mind, who is fickle and is extremely capricious. Sir Anthony comes over to Bath, with a desire to arrange for the match between Jack and Lydia, not knowing that they are already engaged to each other, but under different name. Jack who finds his father's appearance very inconvenient for the development of his love-intrigue, learns to his horror that Sir Anthony has already decided upon a girl for him, and understands that his father requires his implicit obedience—which Jack, a spirited boy refuses, much to the annoyance of Sir Anthony, who is a most obstinate, self-willed father, whose process of education was "very simple"—"Jack, do this, if he demurred, I knocked him down, and if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room."

The comedy of the situation starts when Sir Anthony Absolute, anxious to marry Jack to Lydia, finds him disobedient unless Jack knows who the girl is; but later on when Jack discovers that it is Lydia, he pretends to be most repentent and agrees to marry whatever girl Sir Anthony proposes, and shows

no interest, ostensibly, in Miss Lydia, pretends even that he does not know which is this Languish family and would agree to marry, to obey his father. But now it is Lydia's turn and she feels that she has been befooled by this pretence of Jack as being Ensign Beverley, and she is not prepared to marry him, for she is not willing to give up her dreams of romance. And just as the match is about to be broken by the unwillingness of Lydia, there is the other match also broken by the most stupid jealousy of Faulkland, who can never be convinced that he is loved by Julia for himself and not on grounds of any obligation. And added to this confusion is the conduct of Bob Acres, a gull and a fool, a country-squire but a clown all right, who has come over to propose to Lydia, and learning that one Ensign Beverley is his competitor for her hand, is anxious to settle affair with him or is made to do so ; for he is prevailed upon by Sir Lucius O' Trigger (another suitor for the hand of Lydia, without her knowledge), to send Beverley a challenge to fight a duel. The challenge reaches Jack when he is most despondent, and he accepts it. In all this complication, Lucy, the maid of Lydia has played the chief role of an intriguer, making money from all. She conveys letters from Jack, for she knows that he is Jack, and makes Bob Acres feel that he also has a chance with Lydia, though his letters never reach Lydia. As regards Sir Lucius O' Trigger, she takes letters from Mrs. Malaprop to Sir Lucius who thinks that the 'Delia' of the letters is Lydia herself, and is made to feel so by Lucy's clever intrigue. In the end, just when the combatants have arrived to fight duels, Jack as Beverley to fight against Bob Acres, and Jack as Absolute to fight against Sir Lucius for some supposed affront, the whole party of Sir Anthony, Mrs. Malaprop, Julia, Lydia and servants come, the duel is stopped. Meanwhile Bob Acres has been proved to be as arrant a coward as possibly could exist. And another revelation dawns upon Sir Lucius, that Delia is not Miss Lydia, but Mrs. Malaprop, which so irritates him that he tells Captain Absolute :

“Since you have taken the lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain.”

Mrs. Malaprop plays the part of an old woman who is duped in her love pretences, but is partially calmed by Sir Anthony's compliment, that she was in her “bloom yet.”



#### 4. The Title of the Play

“The Rivals” is a comedy of situation and intrigue *par excellence*, because the action of the play is developed through a number of striking situations, revealing character and because it seeks to rouse interests of the audience in secret amour for the love of a woman among several sets of lovers who consider themselves as ‘rivals’ which is the central theme of the play. It is a comedy because its main business is to expose the follies and foibles of its characters and to hold them up to ridicule. It is also farcical in that its aim—though not the only aim—is to excite laughter of the audience by exaggerating the whims and traits of the characters to an absurd degree. It may as well be described as a *Farcical Comedy of Manners* with a satiric intent, and as such, the comical title seems to be very appropriate.

The central theme of the play is that there is quadrangular rivalry among four sets of characters for the heroine viz., Lydia Languish. The first set consists of identically the same man appearing in two different roles, viz., Ensign Beverley and Captain Absolute while the second comprises Sir Lucius O’ Trigger and Bob Acres. At a later stage in the development of the action the rivalry finally reduces itself to a contest between Sir Lucius and Captain Absolute, after the withdrawal of Bob Acres from the contest partly through cowardice and good nature. Thus there are three stages through which this theme of ‘rivalry’ for the heroine is sustained. It is well worth indicating these stages to justify the appropriateness of the title : (1) In the first stage the title derives its primary justification from two rivals viz., Ensign Beverley with whom Lydia is in secret amour and is looking forward to the happy moment of elopement, and Captain Absolute who is foisted upon her by her guardian, Mrs. Malaprop, always jealous in her guard over her niece, and her friend, Sir Anthony Absolute, the father of Captain Absolute. Both the guardians now set up the conflicting claim of Captain Absolute in preference to Ensign Beverley, little suspecting that the former is no other than the unknown, secretive, half-pay ensign. Every dramatic story arises out of some conflict—some clash of opposed individuals or passions or interests. This conflict is finally resolved in Act IV, Scene II where the bubble is pricked as the identity of Captain Absolute is revealed to all ; (2) In the second stage, the interest in the main plot now shifts to the attempts made to reconcile Lydia into accepting Captain Absolute in his real



person and to two other rivals who appear on the scene. These lovers are Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O' Trigger who has so long been cheated into thinking that he is addressing his suit to Lydia under the name of 'Delia' but who now discovers that his 'Delia' is not 'Lydia' but 'Mrs. Malaprop.' (3) In the third stage, the real plot ends by the resolution of the 'conflict' which is now brought to a close by the 'discovery' of the (a) identity between Beverley and Absolute in duel-ground and (b) the disillusionment of Sir Lucius, leading finally to the withdrawal of Bob Acres and Sir Lucius from the contest and leaving Absolute to reconcile himself to his Lydia as best as he can.

The title is, therefore, justified and is very appropriate.

### 5. Questions of Dramatic Types

- (a) Is it a Comedy or Farcical Comedy or a mere Farce ?
- (b) Is The Play an Artificial Comedy of Manners ? In what respects is it different from the Comedy of Humours ?
- (c) How do you distinguish "The Rivals" from a Sentimental Comedy ?
- (d) Is it a Comedy of Intrigue and Situations ?
- (e) Does the Drama present a Satiric Portraiture of Society ?
- (a) *Is it a Comedy or Farcical Comedy or a mere Farce ?*

Prof. Allardyce Nicoll says that "there is an atmosphere of farce about the whole play and although there is something of farce in every great comedy, this lower strain tends to weaken the general effect of Sheridan's work." Because of the predominance of farcical elements, critics of his way of thinking have condemned the play as a mere farce or a farcical comedy." We do not subscribe to this view and would rather incline to the opinion expressed by Prof. Saintsbury who says: "The Rivals" is an artificial comedy, inclining on one side to farce, and on the parts of Faulkland and Julia, to the sentimental... That it is quite free from artificiality, nobody in his sense would maintain. But Sheridan had the wit to give artificiality itself the touch of buslesquing sincerer examples of it which saves everything... It must be from the lack of imagination, which cannot see the pretence at once of fairy tale and farce, that anybody can fail to discover in it the brilliance of 'The School for Scandal.' The fact is that there is nothing else quite like *The Rivals*.

What is a farce ? A farce is, as we have seen, an exaggerated form of comedy, in which little attempt is made at fidelity to real life, as its only aim is to excite laughter through absurd

characters, situations and dialogue. The story element is light, the conflict artificial, the satire, if any, is incidental and the characterisation weak, because the audience are ready to pass over all these abnormalities or absurdities for the sake of the fun and the mirth that the play provides. In the Elizabethan age, farcical elements are to be found in Shakespeare's "Midsummer's Night's Dream" and "Merry Wives of Windsor" inserted as comic interludes. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, it evolved as a separate form of entertainment. Then with the advent of the Sentimental Comedy, it declined to some extent only to recover its independent position with the anti-sentimental movement of Goldsmith and Sheridan although it had to wait till the Victorian age and the twentieth century to develop itself as a full-length piece especially in Bernard Shaw.

A comedy, on the other hand, is serious in its intention to correct manners and to refine the conduct of man in society. It depicts a segment of life in its cheerful and happy aspects with wit, humour, fun and often satire. Its ultimate aim is not mere laughter, as it is so in the case of 'farce.' It gives a view of life with a serious purpose, its main business being to expose the follies and foibles of man and woman in the superficial aspects of life and to hold them up to ridicule. "The Rivals" has all the essential features of a social and satiric comedy which falls under the category of "Comedy of Manners." Although there are farcical elements in it, it remains a comedy and not a farce. If we call it a mere farce and not a comedy, we will tend to emphasise only one aspect of it in complete disregard of its more important aspect of satire by means of which it exposes the absurdities in characters in general and the sentimentality of the age in particular.

What are the farcical elements in 'The Rivals?' These elements are scattered throughout the play. They are designed to amuse us and make us laugh, though the aim is not to be merely farcical. The subject-matter of the play is serious, although the method adopted for its presentation is farcical. Some of the farcical elements may be mentioned here : (1) The most farcical character is that of Mrs. Malaprop. We simply revel in fun and laughter wherever she appears. If we go away with the impression that the dramatist's intention was merely to amuse and entertain his audience by farcical situations, we will be making a mistake. The dramatist was indeed earnest

when he had at the back of his mind his real motive in the satiric presentation of a typically vain, self-important, husband-hunting woman who makes herself laughable by her muddle-headed use of learned words. Her lack of humour makes her the cause of laughter to all, although she herself is not able to laugh heartily at anything. (2) The scene of altercation between the dogmatic father (Sir Anthony) and the equally determined and obstinate son (Captain Absolute) on the latter's refusal to marry the nameless, rich, heiress of his father's choice, is nothing short of farcical. (II. 1). (3) The scene in which Captain Absolute reads his own letter to Mrs. Malaprop as Beverley with mock-serious indignation repeating the insulting epithets (*e. g.*, she-dragon with her coarse features and stupid use of words), contributes not a little to the comical elements in the play. (III. 3). (4) Another farcical situation is presented in the scene in which Absolute with mock-humility and obedience to paternal will, as his only objective, offers his unconditional submission to his father in the matter of his acceptance of his father's choice as his bride. (III. 10). (5) The scene in which Sir Anthony Absolute cheers up the discomfited Mrs. Malaprop by saying 'Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet,' when she is rejected by Sir Lucius even after making a renewed offer to encourage his addresses, borders on the farcical.

But in spite of these farcical elements, the dramatist's serious purpose of anti-sentimental propaganda should not be lost sight of. The work of Sheridan along with that of Goldsmith is generally taken to mark the reaction against the Sentimental Comedy which had entrenched itself on the English stage by the second half of the eighteenth century. No sensible critic will call "The Rivals" as a mere farce. We, may, however, qualify the word 'comedy' by the epithet 'farcical.'

(b) *Is the Play an Artificial 'Comedy of Manners' ?  
In what respects is it different from the Comedy  
of Humour ?*

The main contribution of Sheridan to the eighteenth century drama was that he, along with Goldsmith, reacted against the sentimental drama of the time and revived the Comedy of Manners on the English stage. The name "Comedy of Manners" was given to the comedy created after the Restoration. In its earliest forms it satirized all the follies of a refined, luxurious



and morally lax society of the upper-class without reserve. It grew out of Ben Jonson's 'humour' comedy as well as of the French writers of comedy. In the Restoration period it was a natural product of the social reaction to the extreme form of austerity that had been imposed upon English society by the Puritans during the years 1642-1660 when the play-houses were closed down. Towards the close of the century, a revulsion of feeling set in against the coarseness and immoral tone of the Comedy of Manners. This brought into existence the "Sentimental Comedy." Gradually this "sentimentalism" in comedy produced a reaction in many writers who feared that the tendency, if carried to excess, might kill the comic Muse and the spirit of laughter. So the attack against Sentimental Comedy came mostly from Goldsmith and Sheridan.

Now the Comedy of Manners, evolved partly out of Jonsonian Humour comedy and partly out of the French comedy of the times, was a bit different from its original form in certain respects. (1) Jonson depicted the manners of society through the "humours" or eccentricities and oddities of individual characters whose behaviour in ludicrous situations made themselves susceptible to satire. Thus comedy did not represent merely the qualities of an age but of all humanity. But the Comedy of Manners, developed after the Restoration as a reaction against Puritanic austerity, was wholly aristocratic, the "manners" displayed being not those of the men in general (such as Jonson showed in his 'humours') but the affectations and cultured veneer of fine society. For, to the Restoration dramatist, a "manner" was not a trait native to an individual, but a quality acquired by him from social intercourse. This fine society, thus mirrored in the Comedy of Manners, as it was the society of Charles II's Court, was careless, light-hearted in its attitude to men and things, intent only on pleasure and amorous intrigue so that the comedy which depicted it, has an air of abandon and of immorality which is markedly different from the manlier temper of the Elizabethan age.

(2) Whereas the Comedy of Humour searched out and displayed the hidden recesses of human passions and desires of all humanity, the Comedy of Manners aimed at representing the surfaces of fashionable society, the behaviour, the manners, the triumphs and humiliations of that segment of human life which is spent in the artificial world of society and under its laws and conventions. The Comedy of Manners has been justly called

artificial, not natural as it is preoccupied with superficial manners of only a particular segment of society—the elegant aristocracy of the age. Here we have no great passions, no emotional crises, no storms or inward struggles of the human heart, as in Shakespeare. The particular field of the Restoration dramatist was the surface of life. (3) The Comedy of Humours was only more profound in that it appealed to some supposedly absolute standard of morality, applicable to all humanity, while the Comedy of Manners took for its norm the standard of the time and of the particular segment of society it represented.

The characteristics of the Restoration Comedy of Manners reintroduced by Sheridan, may now be summarised below : (1) It has its roots in contemporary social and political circumstances. The outrage of moral conventions and cynical rejection of established values were its common features. (2) It depicted lightly and satirically fashionable folly. It represented the superficial habits and manners of only our particular segment of fashionable society of aristocratic and middle-classes. It did not dive deep into the inmost springs of conduct. It preoccupied itself with superficial traits rather than with the profound realities of life. It was incapable of rousing high emotions or raising us to moral or spiritual heights. It 'shows us a state of manners, the field of which, narrow in itself—requires defining—the Court, the fashionable circles of the capital—but the example of which radiates to the remotest parts of the provinces and there creates, as it were, superficial contagions.' (3) Its subject-matter was extremely limited in range. It did not deal with life in general but particular life of a particular social epoch. It did not make the least attempt to sound the depths of human thought or mount to any height of fancy. (4) It is artificial in plot-construction and in the depiction of a limited section of the society of the age. This artificiality is the result of Sheridan's method of depicting human character. His characters are normal men and women—stock characters of comedy by exaggerating the distinctive traits of these characters slightly. Sheridan also creates a certain air of artificiality. (5) Lastly, another factor which makes his plays artificial is the dialogue—witty, sharp and keen at places humorous, sparkling in brilliant exchange of words and repartees. Both the language and behaviour of the characters are highly stylised and artificial. Though modelled on the Restoration Comedy of Manners, perfected by Congreve, it discards many of the



vices and weaknesses of the earlier type. Though professedly anti-sentimental, it could not wholly rid itself of the contagion of sentimentality which it attacked.

(c) *How do you distinguish "The Rivals" from a "Sentimental Comedy"?*

Before Goldsmith and Sheridan appeared on the scene, there had been a decay of the spirit of true comedy of which the best exponent was Congreve in his masterpiece, "The Way of the World." The Comedy of Manners, so popular in the Restoration period, was now rapidly degenerating. It became much too coarse, artificial and blatantly immoral. Its hero became the young gallant who was professedly immoral and its heroine, a woman of fashion who had no sound moral principles to go by. Surely such a state of things could not last long. Towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, a revulsion of feeling set in against this type of coarseness and immorality and a change in tone and moral outlook was soon discernible—a change brought about by this time, not by puritanical suppression but by the force of public opinion. In the political sphere, the domination of the Stuarts came to an end with the glorious Revolution of 1688. William of Orange now ascended the English throne ushering in a new era—a new outlook with new standards of conduct. The days of Charles II with the gay, immoral life of his licentious Court, giving the lead to manners and setting the standards of public and private conduct, were now ended. Great social and economic changes also affected the fortunes of English Comedy with the rise of the middle-class. Matters soon came to a head with the publication of Jeremy Collier's "Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage" in 1698, which gave expression to the middle-class protest against the grossness into which the Restoration Comedy of Manners had sunk. This pamphlet set forth the case for a purge in clear and eloquent language and pleaded for a change in tone. It was this which paved the way for the advent of sensibility to replace wit and immorality in the Comedy of Manners. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the Sentimental Comedy had fully established itself on the English stage. When Goldsmith and Sheridan began to write for the stage, the Sentimental Comedy had completely replaced the Comedy of Manners which was so popular in the days of the Restoration. When it had passed through a heyday of extra-ordinary brilliance, Richard Steele, the famous



essayist, was the first to import the new spirit into his drama. It was he who first made "sentiment" and "morality take the place of profligacy and to sentimentalise comedy using it deliberately for social propaganda and moral reformation. In the hands of later dramatists, pure sensibility degenerated into sentimentalism. Laughter was ultimately banished from its legitimate place and tears took its place and filled the vacuum. The Sentimental Drama simply revelled in the excess of pathos and tearful situation in which wronged innocence was held-up to draw forth the sympathetic tears of the audience. In the words of Allardyce Nicoll : "Comedy had departed from its original home. In the place of laughter, tears in place of intrigue, melodramatic and distressing situation ; in place of rogues, gallants and witty damsels, pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants.—That is what we discover in the typical Sentimental Drama of the late eighteenth century. We are in the world of drama, not of comedy; in the realm of emotions, not of the intellect." In the second half of the eighteenth century, the characteristics of the Sentimental Comedy became more clearly defined and the process of moral reformation was carried a step further when wit and humour were completely replaced by *conscious moralisation* and the comedy became professedly moral in its purpose and outlook. All this became evident in the dramatic writings of the leaders of the Sentimental School viz., Hugh Kelly and Richard Cumberland. In their writings, there was little life of the true spirit of Comedy—Even the intrigue of the earlier comedy now gave place to melodramatic situations with their crude appeals to emotion and the gallant rogues and witty damsels,—the heroes and heroines of the Comedy of Manners—now gave place to serious lovers and weeping heroines. Whenever such a state of things persisted in literature, it invariably gave rise to a reaction.

This reaction against Sentimental Comedy gave birth to the revival of the Comedy of Manners in a new setting. The attack was launched from various quarters but none was so effective as the one led by Goldsmith and Sheridan. Those who were unable to go against the trend of sentimentalism, satirised it in Prologue and Epilogue; others put their potest in the mouths of their characters. It was left to Goldsmith and Sheridan to declare an open revolt against the systematic attempts of the sponsors of the Sentimental Comedy to kill the comic muse. They stemmed the tide of a weeping age and once more taught

men how to laugh more and passed on to the nineteenth century, the traditions of the Comedy of Manners of earlier times, perfected by Congreve. Goldsmith registered his opposition to the Sentimental Comedy in his 'Essay on the Theatre' (1772) and then illustrated his ideas in a comedy, 'The Good-natured Man.' But the dramatic work of Sheridan marks the height of this reaction against Sentimental Comedy. His three comedies *viz.*, "The School for Scandal," "The Rivals" and "The Critic" were thus responsible for the revival of true dramatic literature—the Comedy of Manners—in English. From the deliberate challenge, in the later Prologue to "The Rivals," to the authority of 'the Goddess of the Woeful Countenance,' the Sentimental Muse to the mockery in "The Critic," of the 'edification' derived from the tearful travails of labouring sentiment. Sheridan constantly ridiculed the efforts of 'genteel comedy' to convert the theatre into a "school of morality." In the play also, Sheridan satirised the heroine of Sentimental Comedy in the person of Lydia Languish who is ready "to die with disappointment," when "the prethest distress imaginable" and the prospect of "one of the most sentimental elopements" seem about to fade into the common light of conventional matrimony. In the main plot of "The Rivals" Sheridan was able to carry out his challenge to perfection but in the Julia-Falkland episode of the sub-plot he seems to have yielded to the prevailing temptation to sentimentalism. It is the sentimental element in this play that makes his attack against it, only half-hearted. But one thing he achieved *viz.*, his aim was not moral preaching through sentimental effusions. In the maturer play, "The School for Scandal" Sheridan held-up to ridicule the sententious moralising of the "weeping sentimental comedy" in the role of the hypocrite Joseph Surface. But even here Sheridan does not completely exclude sentiment from this play. Sheridan's attacks on the sentimental drama culminate in "The Critic" which satirizes this type of drama from the very outset. In spite of these drawbacks *i. e.*, sentimental elements in an avowedly anti-sentimental play, "the strength of Sheridan's dramatic talent lay in wit, and wit is the sworn enemy of sentimentality, and cannot live side by side with it at least in a play. Wit had been the chief quality of the drama before these sentimental generations had grown up, and Sheridan's plays go back in spirit to the drama of the late seventeenth century, the Restoration comedy of which Congreve's witty plays are the cream."



*To sum up* : In the warfare against sentimentality, Goldsmith was 'an elder,' though not a better soldier than Sheridan whose challenge to the Sentimental Muse was admittedly more deliberate than that of the former. This is evident from his prologue to all his principal plays viz., "The Rivals," "The School for Scandal" and "The Critic." It appears in the characters of Lydia Languish in "The Rivals" and Joseph Surface in "The School for Scandal." In "The Critic" Sheridan satirizes the whole species of the Sentimental Comedy—the affectations of the stage in general including the excesses of sentimentality. Many even of the chance-phrases of "The Critic" have become proverbial for their infinite wit, laughter, humour, brilliant dialogue which are Sheridan's chief instruments in his attacks on sentimental moralizings in the Sentimental Comedy. It is true that Sheridan does not succeed in completely excluding sentiment from his plays but his plays do not aim at moral preaching through sentimental effusions. "Sheridan's achievement in comedy, however, great its success, did not destroy the vitality of the sentimental play ; the contagion of a seductive vogue was stronger than the example of an individual and transitory triumph."

(d) *Is it a Comedy of Intrigue and Situations ?*

The Restoration Comedy of Intrigue and Situations is one of the four distinct or semi-distinct Schools of comic inventions that evolved when the theatres opened in 1660 e. g., (1) that of Jonson described as the School of 'Humours ;' (2) that of Shirley, Congreve and others, the School of 'Manners;' (3) That of Shakespeare and his followers, which may be called the comedy of 'Romance' or Romantic Comedy and (4) that of 'Intrigue.' These represented almost all the older styles of comic drama as inherited from Elizabethan sources and were, of course, the first that were ransacked by the band of new playwrights eagerly seeking for models and plots. Subsequently three more types evolved ; (5) With "The Wild Gallant" and with "Secret Love" of Dryden came in a variation of the 'Intrigue' type—a more distinct tendency towards the later 'manners' school, more specially to be noticed in the presence of pair of lovers, witty, gay, antimoral and sprightly. For many years these five distinct types remained the recognised schools in which the comic dramatists worked until about the sixties and the early seventies of the century ; (6) *farce*, derived largely from French and Italian sources crept into favour and for a



time dominated the theatres. Finally, in the last decade of the century although hinted at as early as 1680 if not before even that date, there developed that still newer type of comic drama to which has been given the name of (7) *Sentimental*. None of these seven separate schools can be wholly dissociated from another, and most often we see merely general mixtures of two or three of them more or less successfully welded together.

Sheridan's dramas are typical mixtures of 4 or 5 of these types *viz.*, (1) Comedy of 'humour;' (2) Comedy of 'Manners ;' (3) Comedy of Intrigue and Situation; (4) Comedy of Sentiment; and (5) 'Farce.' His dramas are so welded by his art that they remain the very best artificial Comedy of Manners in the eighteenth century. Though directed against the Sentimental Comedy, are they not as a matter of fact free from these sentimental elements and concepts but, on the whole, they are not sentimental in their impact. Perhaps Sheridan inadvertently succumbed to the prevailing tendency of the age *i. e.*, the late eighteenth century, presenting "in place of laughter, tears ; in place of intrigue, melodramatic and distressing situations, in place of rogues and gallants and wily damsels, pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants."

The Restoration Comedy of Intrigues, evolved after the Spanish model, specialised in situations arising out of infidelity in love and marriage, underhand plotting and secret amours. In a drama story, incident, and situation should be so evolved and introduced at the appropriate stage so as to help in the development of character. A mere story is a mere succession of incidents and situations, if these do not embody and display character and human nature, only give you something of the nature of a raw melodrama. It may be noted that the "intrigue" of the earlier comedy gave place to distressing and melodramatic situations in the 'Sentimental Comedy.' Sheridan studiously avoided these pitfalls.

Several traits of Restoration Comedy have their genesis in contemporary social and political circumstances. In 1660, when Charles II was "restored" to the English throne, the English drama reacted against the Puritanism of the previous regime. This reaction very often exceeded all limits of decency and decorum. Forbidden pleasures were restored with a vengeance and a kind of social anarchy prevailed in aristocratic society. Virtually the same state of things prevailed till Sheridan appea-

red on the scene. The only perceptible change in the interim period was the ascendancy of the middle-class. The rich idle and fashionable middle-class gentry now dictated manners whereas in the preceding age the Court and nobles dominated society. Sheridan's comedy, though modelled on the Restoration Comedy of Manners which reached its perfection in Congreve, presents a faithful but somewhat cynical and imaginative rather than a realistic portraiture of the late eighteenth century society of the upper-middle-class gentry. It was a fashionable society of men in periwigs and women in elaborate gowns, of sedan-chairs and coffee-houses, pleasure-haunts, fashionable groves and gardens, suggestive and witty conversations, intrigues etc. Scandal-mongering, intrigue, secret amours, senseless prattle over trifles were the chief follies of the fashionable society. No literature of the age gives us a picture as graphic and revealing as what Sheridan presents us in his dramas. The story and characters run on traditional lines. The subject-matter is very trivial *i. e.*, the superficial manners of fashionable society, were incapable of arousing higher emotions. So the profound realities of life are untouched. The life reflected here is the life of intrigue and melodramatic situations which characterised middle-class fashionable society of the age. It is not the whole of life ; it is rather the essence of the existence of the upper-middle-class fashionable people living in Bath and London. The action of his plays is developed through a number of striking situations. He seems to have an instinct for choosing those intriguing situations which throw light on the characters obeying "humours" of their own and their 'types' and which drive them along a narrow groove of actions. There is preplanned manipulation of characters who obey only their 'humours' under the dictation of the dramatist with the result that there is nothing like a natural evolution of the characters. This predetermination of 'intrigues' and "situations" to serve the special purpose of the dramatist does not mean that the characters are automats. They do have a sufficient vitality of their own as living individuals but the fact is that they represent specific 'humours'—the "type" rather than the "individual" and are but variants of the stock-characters of old comedies. It is this that gives the plays of Sheridan an "artificial" air about them. That Sheridan was good at inventing certain artificial but nonetheless dramatic situations which instinctively call forth lau-

ghter and create suspense in us, will be clear from the examples given below :—

(1) The very ‘exposition’ in the opening scene strikes the key-note of play. It lays bare the secretive and somewhat intriguing “situation” in which Captain Absolute under the assumed name of ‘Ensign Beverley’ is courting and carrying on an intrigue with the rich and waywardly romantic heiress, Lady Languish, who prefers to be courted by a poor romantic lover rather than the son of a rich baronet such as the Captain is. It also hints another love-episode introduced by the sub-plot and introduces the typical dictatorial father of the old conservative school who is specially hard upon his son in the matter of the choice of a wife for him. All these ticklish situations “complicate” the action.

(2) Another intriguing “situation” is provided in the next scene in which a typically vain, self-important country-woman—an old husband-hunting type who thinks himself charming enough to attract men, is introduced. We are told she is engaged in a secret love-correspondence with an Irish baronet. We also learn about the arrival of a foolish squire aspiring to be a city beau, encouraged by Mrs. Malaprop to pay addresses to Lydia Languish.

(3) The most comical “situation” is presented in the first scene of the Second Act in which the self-willed and authoritative father, whose motto in life is to keep an iron-hand over his son, especially in the matter of forcing the latter to marry the girl of his own choice, is blissfully ignorant of the fact that the lady is no other than that the one on which his son has set his heart.

(4) A tense “situation” is provided in the second scene of the Fourth Act in which Absolute meets Lydia in his own person in the presence of his father and Mrs. Malaprop and is compelled to divulge this real identity with Ensign Beverley. Lydia is not prepared to give up her dreams of romance. She feels frustrated in her romantic plan of elopement.

(5) A highly amusing “situation” is created by the foolish squire, Bob Acres who thinks he can win the love of Lydia by his fine gorgeous dress and swaggering pose, even after his dismissal by Mrs. Malaprop.

(6) Bob Acres in another scene, falls an easy victim to the intrigue of Sir Lucius O'Trigger who puts it into his head the







only evoke our pity and even sympathy ; only an *affected wit* could cause ridicule, the basis of our comic delight. In order to satirise "*affected wit*" Sheridan like a consummate artist had to introduce an element of 'exaggeration' into his characterisation. It is this which enabled him to capture for all time the life and manners of the social group at Bath, presenting an imaginative rather than a realistic picture of men and things. Sheridan had thus to exaggerate to impress or indulge in subtle caricature. But beneath the outer satirical crust, we can invariably find a fairly graphic picture of the fashionable folly of the age. The genesis of this element of "*exaggeration*" must be sought in Ben Jonson, who was the first English classical comedian to hit upon this device of endowing each one of his characters with some particular "*whim* or "*affectation*"—some ludicrous exaggeration of manner, speech or dress and of thrusting forward again and again this single old feature in such a way that all others might be lost sight of. Likewise in Sheridan, we find this dominant or master-passionsome "*ruling foible*" diverting the action of its subject into courses which move our mirth and appeal to our sense of the ridiculous, towering above the undergrowth of all the other 'humours.' Like all satirists, Sheridan "*exaggerates*" the distinctive traits of his characters whose incessant brilliance is part of their charm, though professedly artificial in tone. It is this that makes his 'The School for Scandal' 'the best Comedy of Manners in the language and the best play of any kind since Shakespeare,' even though it is true to say that 'the higher reaches of the comic drama were beyond Sheridan,' because he dealt with superficial manners rather than the profound realities of life.

The question arises : If a profound knowledge of human nature—a deep interpretation or "*criticism of life*" is to be a criterion of a great work, does Sheridan have such a knowledge ?

A critic has given the reply to such a question : "Nobody can suggest that Sheridan's knowledge was very deep, but so far as it did go, it was genuine. His characters are very seldom portraits ; as a rule they are gently caricatured. But the stage has a way of being most life-like when it is a little larger than life, and nearly all Sheridan's people are recognizable types, containing their own inner vitality. The reason is that they were all observed directly from life. Because they are not portraits and because their creator was no more than a lively

youth at the time when he brought them into existence, none of these people have very much heart. But it would be unsuitable if they had, for Sheridan's first impulse towards dramatic writing was always satiric ; and in such works any attempt at emotional writing must have devolved into sentimentality." (Darlington.)

Let us now see how Sheridan presents before us his satiric portraits. Except for the character of Captain Absolute and to some extent that of Julia, Sheridan gives his satiric interpretation of life in every one of the main characters : (1) In Mrs. Malaprop, Sheridan is satirising the provincial woman desperately trying to live up to the smartness of Bath "by her muddle-headed but unconscious use of learned words." Her "malapropisms" are as diverting and amusing as her predecessor, Dogberry, an immortal creation of Shakespeare, occupying a very prominent place in the portrait-gallery of comic characters in world literature. She is the embodiment of stupendous egoism and fatuity. Sheridan also satirises in her person the type of the old husband-hunting woman who thinks herself charming enough in her fairly advanced age to attract men. Yet Sheridan's satire is never bitter, malicious or pungent but mild, kindly and genial. This character as well as other is so conceived with a benignity and a large hearted sympathy that are so remote from mockery and contempt that we tend to laugh with them, and not at them. Mrs. Malaprop's parade of learning and her 'pride in her nice derangement of epitaphs' also constitute another target at which Sheridan aims to level his satirical attack of the utter hollowness of the claims to all-round education of the elderly provincial women of the time who wanted to pass for highly cultured and educated persons. We can also glean the average opinion of leaders of society about the necessity for female education. Mrs. Malaprop is also satirised by Sheridan for her tyrannical watch over her niece whom she thinks she is entitled to intimidate by a set of maxims of formulas beginning with "what has young woman to do with...?" (2) In the character of Sir Anthony Absolute, Sheridan presents a satiric portrait of the type of self-willed authoritative father of the old conservative school who believes in keeping an iron hand over his son even when he has grown into an adult. He is the type who will listen to no reason or argument from his son who is to accept his choice of even the ugliest women on earth for a wife. Perhaps Sheridan



intended Sir Anthony Absolute to be the prototype of his father who could never reconcile himself to his son's marriage with Miss Elizabeth Linley after elopement. (3) Lydia Languish is a satiric portrait of the type of the spoilt child of fortune whose head had been turned by her reading of too many romantic novels. Her proposal for elopement and runaway marriage with a poor but romantic lover illustrates the absurd lengths to which her romantic and sentimental conception of life can carry her. (4) In the character of Sir Lucius O' Trigger, Sheridan is satirising the type of a pugnacious bully and adventurer with whom fighting is a kind of pastime and who is out to mend his fortune by entering upon matrimony with some rich girl in Bath. Sheridan assured Irishmen that he had no intention of satirising the Irish temperament and national character in drawing up this portrait of a bullying and trigger-happy adventurer. (5) Falkland is a "humour" character in whom jealousy is carried to *comic exaggeration*—the hero of the sentimental episode, set up by Sheridan as the butt of his wit, satire and raillery. (6) Bob Acres is a comical, satirical and almost farcical character—the type of a foolish country-squire aspiring to be a city beau who thinks that merely by putting on fine dress and assuming a swaggering air he can win the love of his lady.

6. *Picture of Social Life in Bath : (a) in Sheridan's Time and (b) as presented in "The Rivals"*

(a) *Bath in Sheridan's Time.*

Literature grows directly out of life and is fundamentally an expression of life and the great impulses behind literature are the author's desire for self expression, interest in men and women, their lives, motives, passions and relationships—constituting the great drama of human life and action.

In "The Rivals," Sheridan drew upon his personal experiences of his life in Bath. The picture of eighteenth century high life in Bath that he has presented in this drama, is imaginative rather than a realistic one, like every great work of art but in broad essentials, he has succeeded in capturing for all time the life and manners of a world gone-by. It is not a total and integral picture of society like that presented by the social historian. It offers us a picture of one segment of social life in bath viz., the life of "the upper-classes of a community whose movements and entertainments and other doings are more or less conspicuous."

Bath is a country-town of Somerset. It is situated in the Avon valley at a distance of some 207 miles from London. The city is arranged in a series of natural crescents backed by hills. Its sheltered position and natural springs have made it popular since Roman times *i. e.*, First century B. C. In Rome itself the use of baths, constructed after the Greek model, grew rapidly after the Third century B. C. and under the empire both private and public baths reached the height of luxury. This tradition was kept up off and on in Bath after the Romans left England till we come to the eighteenth century. The medicinal uses of hot spring water in chronic rheumatism, gout and other forms of illness, have long been recognised. Even now the Roman remains of the city are the most extensive in England.

It was not till we come to the time of Queen Anne that Bath came into prominence in England as a health and pleasure-resort, for the well-to-do and the leisurely middle and upper-classes of the time. Queen Anne extended her patronage to it for reasons of her personal health. Wars in the continent of Europe prevented the rich people from frequenting the hot springs, baths and watering-places in Belgium and Germany. Social life in England was largely dominated by the rising middle-class whose ascendancy, is accounted for by the growing decay of the power and influence of the Court after the death of Charles II. Middle-class people who could hardly afford to spend a lot of money on expensive foreign tours, naturally wanted a cheaper health-resort nearer home and in their own country. These factors favoured the development of Bath as a health and pleasure-resort. About this time, discovery of some new springs in 1758 led to the opening of Bath as the most favoured provincial town for these purposes. The possibilities of the future development of Bath were fully explored by one Beau Nash, a speculator who took a long term lease of the area covered by the hot springs and completely transformed the place by adding many new amenities and carrying out a general improvement of the place, especially in the pump-house, the new Assembly Rooms, the parade-grounds, concert-halls, circulating libraries, spring-gardens etc.

#### (b) Bath in "*The Rivals*"

"*The Rivals*" is an artificial Comedy of Manners. Sheridan sacrifices naturalness at the altar of wit and drama-effectiveness both in its brilliant dialogue (his own invention) and characteri-



sation through exaggeration of follies and foibles. Yet it cannot be said that Sheridan fails to hold the mirror up to Nature. Like a consummate artist, he has eminently succeeded in presenting a picture of fashionable folly practised in the high life of Bath through his imaginative and satiric rather than a mere realistic portrait of men and things. This is the business of a Comedy of Manners in which the dramatist avowedly presents a picture of the world around him in its comic aspects. This drama, therefore, presents a vivid and entertaining picture of upper-class life of the time, as it was lived in Bath, and experienced by the author.

“The scene in this comedy is laid in Bath in the atmosphere of affectation, intrigue, duelling and elopement with which Sheridan was familiar. He had often looked in these scenes and played his part in them. In fact, as is not uncommon when a youngman sets out to write a novel or a play, he uses some of his personal experience to furnish the plot and the character.”

We can build up the topography of Bath as it flourished in Sheridan's days from allusions to buildings, health-resorts etc. in the play. (1) In the first place, there is a reference to Gyde's Porch where Fag arranges to meet Thomas in the evening in Act I, Scene I. Mr. Gyde kept the lower Rooms *i. e.*, the lower portion of the Assembly House built by the famous architect, Thomas Harrison under the direction of Beau Nash. This was a convenient place of meeting for the servants and menials of the town; (2) Bull's Circulating Library was situated opposite Gyde's Porch. It was from this library that Lucy, the maid of Lydia Languish, was ordered to look for the romantic novels and popular romances wanted by her mistress (Act I, Scene II); (3) Cox's Museum exhibited mechanical toys and curiosities (Act II, Scene I); (4) There were two important public-places for entertainments *e. g.*, (a) The old Assembly Rooms (Lower Rooms) and (b) The new Assembly Rooms where Bob Acres proposes some kind of entertainment on the occasion of the engagements of the happy couples (Act V, Scene III). All these places were the resort of fashionable society where men in periwigs and women in elaborate gowns used to meet everyday; (5) The Royal Crescent (a building shaped like a crescent) was another such resort, besides the North parade and the South parade, where some of the scenes are laid; (6) The Spring Gardens is the place where Captain Absolute proposes to fight his duel with Sir Lucius O'Trigger. These gardens are very

delightful and afford to all conditions of people, a very rational amusement. Public breakfast, accompanied by band, used to be provided in these gardens; (7) The Kings' Meadfields was a convenient and secretive sort of place used for fighting duels, prohibited by law.

Beau Nash introduced certain rules, for the regulation, correction and refinement of manners, social failings and fashionable folly of men and women of the town who assembled daily in these public-places: (a) Dances, amusements and entertainments were not usually allowed beyond eleven at night. That Fag, that roguish and somewhat arrogant servant of Captain Absolute did not like this kind of restriction, is seen from his speech (Act I, Sc. I) where he says: "But damn the place, I'm tired of it; the regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle, nor a card after eleven, nor wear swords in the streets nor in the ball-dances." (b) Duelling was prohibited. Captain Absolute hides his sword under his great coat while proceeding to the duel-ground to fight with Sir Lucius. He says: A sword in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog" (Act V, Sc. II). Beau Nash "during his regime in Bath, prohibited the wearing of words, so as to discourage duelling."

Pleasure and health were obviously the two chief objectives. Elderly people usually suffering from rheumatism, used to go to Bath. The hot springs, were supposed to possess curative properties. Sir Anthony, for instance, drove *poste haste* into the town simply because he apprehended that "another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit." Young persons flocked to the public-places of entertainment in the town for the sake of pleasure. The main preoccupations of the women were love-making, love-intrigue, and scandal-mongering. They wanted to make themselves as attractive as possible by means of their toilet. Sheridan's comedy presents a narrow world, constituting the fashionable circle of Bath, the example of which radiates even to the farthestmost parts of other provincial towns and there creates, as it were, superficial contagions. It is a part of that typical form of civilisation evolved by the well-to-do, gay and leisured class of the age in their search for health and pleasure. It is a world of pleasure-haunts, fashionable groves and gardens, suggestive conversations, (brilliant in its phrasing and rousing in its wit, full of that rare charm that arises from the exchange of the quick repartee); intrigues, elopements, scandal-mongering gossip, flirtations of



gallant life. The daily routine of the gay life, frivolity and dissipation in Bath is put in the mouth of Fag in these terms : "after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards ; at night we dance."

7. (a) *Sheridan as an Interpreter of Character and the Art of Characterisation in The Rivals*
- (b) *General Characteristics of Men and Women*
- (c) *The Role of Minor Characters in the Play*
- (d) *Weaknesses and Defects in Characterisation and in the Play Itself.*

(a) *As an Interpreter of Character*

A drama is a composite art, in which the author, the actor, and the stage-manager, all combine to produce the total effect through the machinery of plot, character's dialogue, an atmosphere and an outlook or interpretation of life. The full qualities of a drama are only revealed in presentation on the stage. A good deal of what is called 'dramatic effect' depends on conditions of stage-representation. The literary art of the drama is organically bound up with its histrionic conditions and there is much to be said in favour of the good old name for drama—"a stage-play." Because of this factor, it is often carelessly assumed that since the business of the stage is so largely and so necessarily with action, story (plot), incident, situation are all important and characterisation in a play is really of minor importance. This is a wrong assumption. Characterisation is the really fundamental and lasting element in the greatness of a dramatic work. "A mere story—a mere succession of incidents, if these do not embody and display character and human nature, only give you a melodrama," and not a real drama properly so called. The plot is subordinate to character. A good play evolves as a natural consequence of the fact that a number of given people, of such and such motives and passions, are brought together in circumstances which give rise to an interplay of influence or clash of interests among them." The principal function of dialogue in a drama is in direct connection with characterisation. The dialogue is a means of characterisation. The principles of dramatic economy require that every word of the dialogue must be made to tell and make a contribution to the presentation of character in such a way that it may be adequate to all the demands which the plot makes upon it. Dialogue then becomes an essential adjunct to

action, or even an integral part of it ; the story moving beneath the talk, and being, stage by stage, elucidated by it. Every dramatic story arises out of some "conflict"—of opposed individuals, or passions or interests. Some kind of "conflict" is the very backbone of a dramatic story. With the opening of this conflict the real plot begins ; with its conclusion the real plot ends. The principles of parallelism and contrast are illustrated in the composition of the plot in the form of the reduplication of motives and in characterisation respectively. In regard to the first principle, an excellent effect is often obtained when the central idea of one part of the action in the main plot is made to illustrate and reinforce the other in the sub-plot. As regards the principle of contrast in characterisation, it has been a favourite practice with dramatists of all times and scholars to present leading persons of a drama as companion-studies.

Let us now see how far the above criteria of dramatic construction are illustrated in "The Rivals." The main plot is concerned with the love-intrigue between the hero and the heroine, this is reinforced by the Falkland-Julia episode constituting the sub-plot. Both are designed to stem the torrent of a weeping age and to teach men how to laugh once more *i. e.*, both react against the Sentimental Drama of the time and reintroduce the Comedy of Manners on the English stage. The plot is very simple ; there is nothing original, intriguing or interesting about it. Characterisation is fundamental and the main interest which keeps the characters alive is the interest of the men and women. The story, incident and situation are but mere phases in the development of character, as "The Rivals" is emphatically no melodrama. The characters are contrasted and there is parallelism in the plot-structure. The characters all belong to the stock, common to comedy. Dialogue reveals character. The dialogue constitutes the chief fascination of the play. Yet there is an air of artificiality in the characters, the dialogues and the society represented by the play. The play represents the "surfaces"—the artificial manners of a particular segment of civilised society. The characters embody some dominant "humour." They do not talk as people do in real life. Every one of the characters is endowed with a fair share of Sheridan's inimitable gift of wit, humour and sparkle of phrasing. Like the social historian, Sheridan may be said to have eminently succeeded in capturing for all time the life and "manners" of a bygone world—mid-eighteenth century. "The Rivals" is thus



a miracle as a first play, although it is not flawless. It is a study of artificial manners rather than the profound realities of life. As a stage-play, it is eminently successful. Sheridan seemed to have some innate knowledge of stage-technique and conventions. His great contribution is the dialogue, always scintillating with wit and humour.

(b) *General Characteristics of His Men and Women*

We now turn to the other question—what is Sheridan's interpretation of character or art of characterisation? In other words, what are the general characteristics of the men and women he created? "The Rivals" is an artificial Comedy of Manners. Some of the invariable elements of this type of comedy are : (1) The presence of at least one pair of witty lovers engaged in love-intrigue ; (2) The manners of fashionable people in the artificial world of society in so far as they depart from the norms of behaviour ; (3) The distinctive traits of each character under satirical portraiture are exaggerated ; (4) Their dialogue is witty, free and graceful and their language as well as behaviour in social situations are highly stylised and artificial ; (5) The plot is of less consequence than the wit ; (6) There is an absence of crude realism in that the picture of the life and manners of a bygone age is imaginative rather than a realistic picture of men and things ; (7) There is a total lack of any emotion whatsoever and an air of refined cynicism over the whole production. All these elements of the Restoration Comedy of the 'Manners' school are present in Sheridan's "The Rivals." The play is an artificial Comedy of Manners because (1) The distinctive traits of his characters are all exaggerated for satirical purposes, which gives them an air of artificiality about them ; (2) the dialogue is invariably scintillating with wit and all the characters including the servants, are nothing short of brilliance in the exchange of words and there are no dullards. It is this excessive brilliance that creates a tone of artificiality in the dialogues. If these characters talked as they would in real life, they would be unbearably dull ; (3) Sheridan's aim in these plays was to represent the surfaces of civilised society, the manners of the characters being highly artificial rather than natural. His characters are incapable of high emotion or of rising to the heights. Sheridan was not a deep interpreter of life, like Shakespeare and as such, he could brilliantly touch the surfaces of life without sounding the depths. Even the higher reaches of the comic drama were

beyond Sheridan. Hence "wit rather than humour, brilliancy rather than depth, satire rather than sympathy, art rather than nature, are the characteristics of Sheridan's comedies."

The type of Restoration 'humour' comedy, which Sheridan followed, originated with Ben Jonson. The method of the 'humour' comedy was akin to that of the moralities that is to clothe some abstract quality in the garb of a man, invest it with such realistic trappings as to make it appear passably like a human-being and set it amongst its fellows, the whole relieved often, as was Jonson's way, against a background taken from real life. This method of 'humour' comedy, originated by Ben Jonson, was adopted by Restoration dramatists of the "manners" school and by Sheridan. It was immediately critical and in so far as it aimed at universality, as any great work of art, worthy of the name must do, it aimed at it through the individual. Ben Jonson also made his 'humour' characters both individuals and types and so did Sheridan, who like all satirists, exaggerated "the distinctive traits of his characters for correction of their manners which deviated from the norm." It is this element of "exaggeration" that has laid Sheridan open to the charge to making his characters abstractions of comic traits.....but no living people," "merely personified "humours" and no more."

The charge is not without some foundation. In the first place, Sheridan has deliberately named the characters according to the specific 'humour' that they display in their action throughout the play e. g., (1) The name of "Sir Anthony Absolute" suggests the 'humour' of absoluteness, 'dogmatism' 'intolerance' and 'imperiousness' in his opinions and views on men and things. He is definitely the type of a man who cannot brook any opposition to his will and who must needs force his son to marry the girl of his choice ; (2) The name of Lydia Languish suggests that she is the type of the spoilt child of ease and fortune who is languishing with her sentimental and romantic conception of love which has turned her head. (3) The name of "O'Trigger" suggests the "trigger-happy" Irish adventurer who delights in the etiquette of the duel ; (4) Acres suggests the type of the foolish country-squire who prides himself on his possession of his paternal acres and thinks that he can easily transform himself into a city beau by his fine dress and swaggering air. All these characters are typical of some 'humours' or some distinctive and dominant traits which



they do display in their actions throughout the play but to say that they represent nothing else than these "humours" will be taking a rather one-sided view of things. They are types as well as individuals and it is the co-existence of these individual traits that saves them from being automatons or abstractions because of the dominance of particular 'humours.' They have an interest vitality of their own, which enables them to act as individuals while conforming to the pattern dictated by their 'humours' e. g., Sir Anthony's "touch of caustic wit" and sense of humour save him from the authoritative, domineering and dogmatic figure that his 'humour' makes him. When at long last Mrs. Malaprop is discomfited, it is he alone who thinks it proper to cheer her up with the words: "Come Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—You are in your bloom yet." It is true that Sheridan's characters do not acquire the element of universality while retaining their individual qualities, like Chaucer's but it would be harsh criticism if we say with the Oxford editor of "The Rivals" that "his characters are personified 'humours' and no more." His characters are definitely not mere puppets and automatons "mere abstractions of some comic trait, excellently diverting, but no living people," as alleged by some critics. They do not lack vitality, initiative and movement as individuals, although all these are restricted by the fact that the particular 'humour' or eccentricity drive them along a set channel of action and movement, like the stock-characters of old comedies.

As regards the criticism that "the higher reaches of comic drama were beyond Sheridan," it is of course true to say that the very fact that his drama is a portrait of an artificial world of society and of superficial manners makes his characters touch the surface of life and not its profound realities. Sheridan has portrayed only the "externals of conduct" without sounding the depths and the profound realities of life. His sphere was the surface of life in the artificial world of society represented by him. He had no sympathy for moral prigs because the environment in which the characters lived, moved and had their being, hardly encouraged such types. Character can develop only if there is an inner and psychological conflict at its basis. Such psychological subtleties are beyond Sheridan. We look in vain for subtleties of great passions, emotional crises and storms of the heart. His characters have not much of heart in them.

The principles of contrast commonly underlies the scheme of characters in any well-organised play. Shakespeare repeatedly uses contrast for moral as well as dramatic effect. Likewise Sheridan's characters are admirably contrasted. Lydia of the main plot is contrasted with Julia of the under-plot in the Falkland-Julia episode in regard to their love for Captain Absolute and Falkland respectively. Captain Absolute's common-sense-approach to love is contrasted against the sentimental effusions of Falkland. Among the minor characters, Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O' Trigger offer glaring contrasts as rivals in love. It is a contrast between a cowardly country-gentleman aspiring to be a city beau after contracting a marriage with a fashionable and wealthy young lady as against a veteran duellist out to mend his fortune through matrimony.

*To sum up:* Though representing some typical comic eccentricity after the Jonsonian tradition, Sheridan's characters are also individuals. Though restricted to a set channel of action by their typical eccentricity, they have sufficient vitality as living individuals. They lack depth and subtlety. They touch the surfaces of life without sounding the depths of human passion. They deal with the behaviour, manners, the triumphs and humiliations of that part of 'high' life which has to do with the fashionable society of Bath. All the characters are normal men and men with traits, distinctly exaggerated for purposes of satirical portrature. They are all stock-characters of old comedy. The characters are admirably contrasted and varied.

### (c) *The Role of Minor Characters in the Play*

Parallelism is an important principle of structural design in a drama, observed in its characterisation as well as in the composition of plot, episodes, and incidents. An excellent dramatic effect in the reduplication of motives is obtained by the application in this principle of parallelism to major and minor characters. The study of the character-scheme of "The Rivals" will reveal this parallelism. In "The Rivals" minor characters serve a three-fold purpose viz., They contribute to (1) the movement and action of the plot ; (2) the spirit of wit and humour in the comedy and create an additional interest in the drama as contrasted individuals and (3) illustrate and reinforce the central idea of the main part of the action re-appearing in another.



There are four minor characters *viz.*, (1) Fag, the faithful and witty servant of Captain Absolute and the most important of them all (2) David, the devoted servant of Bob Acres and Fag's country-side counterpart (3) Thomas, the conservative coachman of Sir Anthony Absolute and (4) Lucy, the cunning and roguish maid of Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia.

The minor characters not only contribute to the action and movement of the plot, reinforce the idea of the main plot by their wit and rogueries in intriguing situations but also have great dramatic importance. They play a part analogous to the Greek Chorus, whose business is to report what happens off the stage and to make such comments from time to time as would deepen the desired effect. They furnish us with new information for the better understanding of the "exposition." Being minor characters they undoubtedly play a subsidiary part which nonetheless contributes to the development of the plot. Fig and Lucy, for instance, occupy key positions in the drama because both are best fitted to play a significant part in the drama of situation and love-intrigue in which the major characters are engaged in their pursuit of secret amours. They provide the greater part of the "exposition" of the play. The purpose of the "exposition" is to put the audience in possession of all such information as is needed for the proper understanding of the play.

At different stages in the development of the plot and the unravelling of the conflict, Fag and Lucy furnish explanatory matter without which the play cannot be properly understood. The management of this explanatory matter is one of the severest tests of a dramatist's skill. Sheridan invariably makes his minor characters furnish the key to the development of the plot and the unravelling of "complications" arising out of the "conflict." It is the deep interest in the fortunes of their masters that makes these servants and maid-servants interested parties in love-intrigues. Thus, Fag, the most intelligent of the group is in possession of his master's secret love-affair with the rich heiress, Miss Lydia Languish. When Captain Absolute is courting as Ensign Beverley to satisfy the romantic fancy of his lady-love, Lucy, the roguish maid of Mrs. Malaprop, acts as a go-between in the love-affair of Lydia and Ensign Beverley. She is the person who introduces an element of "complication" leading to its crisis, when she lets Sir Lucius O' Trigger under-

stand that his 'Delia' is Lydia Languish herself. This adds to the fun and merriment of the play. Ultimately, Sir Lucius gives up his claim to Lydia when he learns the real truth that his 'Delia' is Mrs. Malaprop, the old widow, who thinks herself charming enough to attract men. She is thus the medium through whom love-intrigues as between Ensign Beverley and Lydia and Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Lucius are carried on. She also confides to Fag the secret information about the choice of Lydia to be the destined wife of Captain Absolute by Sir Anthony. All the male minor characters, notably Fag and David, contribute a good deal to the *denouement*—the ultimate stage of the plot, in which the dramatic action is brought to an issue on which the imagination is willing to rest with the senses of finality and completeness. They inform the ladies and Sir Anthony of the coming duel and prevent it in time thereby giving a comedic turn to events.

The minor characters also contribute to the spirit of wit and fun in the comedy. Like the main characters, they are also types from the lower order or rank of life. Thus, Fag is the type of faithful but arrogant servant attached to a fashionable youngman in military service. He is also very witty. He yields to none in evincing a great interest in the affairs of his master. David, the servant of Bob Acres, is his country-side counterpart. He is also witty. Some of his observations are ironical. Lucy is the typical maid-servant of a vain, self-important country-woman trying to behave like a fashionable town-lady.

All the minor characters are contrasted. It is this which makes each an individual study of the type to which it belongs. Each is vividly typical and yet invested with some distinct trait, which is "exaggerated" a bit. It is this that creates a certain air of artificiality. There are no dullards about them. Each is nothingshort of brilliance in his or her own way in the exchange of words.

(d) *Weaknesses and Defects in Characterisation and in the Play Itself—An Appreciation*

Weaknesses and defects in characterisation and in the play itself, may be summed up thus: (1) The characterisation is much too artificial, farcical and exaggerated. (b) Though professedly anti-sentimental, it is not completely devoid of sentiment. (c)



its characters, high or low, exhibit an infinite capacity for wit. (d) Sheridan is guilty of plagiarism in respect of the material of the main plot, character and situations. (e) Sheridan's method of portraying human character is artificial in that he exaggerates distinctive traits beyond human probability. The incessant brilliance of the dialogues, high or low, imparts a tone of artificiality. In spite of his success and popularity, the higher reaches of comic drama were beyond Sheridan. (f) The plot is not natural and probable. "Though we have often heard of younger brothers and fortune-hunters, assuming fictitious titles and estates as credentials to rich heiresses, it seems very unlikely that real rank and fortune should be deemed an objection and therefore disclaimed as in the piece before us. Here the marvellous and the romantic seem to lose sight of the nature and probable." (Ivor Evans).

Let us now consider these criticisms in the light of facts : (1) There are farcical elements arising more from character than from plot. The individual traits of character are all exaggerated. This is part of Sheridan's dramatic technique. This exaggeration imparts to the characters an air of artificiality. The very names of Sheridan's dramatis personnel suggest their kinship with 'humour comedy' of Ben Jonson *e.g.*, Languish, Malaprop, O' Trigger, Absolute, Acres, Fag. Falkland's 'humour' is unreasonable jealousy, as clearly as that of O' Trigger's love of fighting. Two artificial humours are also introduced in Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop with her 'nice derangement of epithets,' the unparalleled and unrivalled 'Queen of Dictionary' in broad outlines, every great comedy has these farcical elements (a point discussed elsewhere) but to call the play a farce and not a comedy will be doing injustice to it. "The Rivals" is not a farce merely because it exaggerates the distinctive traits of its characters. Its intention is not merely to provoke laughter but to correct manners and to react against the Sentimental Comedy which had become popular. It is an artificial Comedy of Manners, presenting the artificial world of society and showing characters who depart from normal expectations of good and gentle behaviour. (2) The work of Sheridan marks the reaction against the Sentimental Comedy which had entrenched itself on the English stage by the second half of the eighteenth century. In these Sentimental Dramas, true wit, humour and laughter were banished and replaced by moralizations, preaching and tears indulged in by gallant rogues, serious lovers, witty damsels, and

weeping heroines in melodramatic situations. Sheridan's drama revives the true comedy of Congreve by attacking these unhealthy tendencies. But in actual practice none of Sheridan's dramas is completely devoid of sentiment. Perhaps Sheridan was so much influenced by the spirit of his age that even though professedly attacking the sentimental drama, he could not but be influenced by it. He could not at once rid himself wholly of the contagion of the sentimentality which he attacked. "Though Faulkland is a "humour" character, in whom jealousy is carried to comic exaggeration, some of his and Julia's speeches seem rather an unconscious echo of sentimental diction than raillery at its extravagance." The sentimental scenes between Faulkland and Julia are considered by many critics to be blemishes. But, in Sheridan's defence, it may be said that in writing these scenes, he was not making a concession but framing an indictment. Read between the lines they are really burlesque in the manner of some of the scenes in the "The Critic." Perhaps Sheridan knew how dangerous it was in his age to write a comedy totally devoid of sentiment. So he cleverly introduced the Julia-Faulkland episode in the minor plot and kept itself separate from the main plot. (3) "The Rivals" is a joyous Comedy of Manners, full of fun and gaiety and sparkling with wit and humour. All the characters are invariably witty. They display a certain polish and refinement in their talk and behaviour. There are no dullards here. All the figures are nothing short of brilliance in their smart and witty repartees. This brilliance undoubtedly creates a tone of artificiality. Both in dialogue and in character, Sheridan has the same brilliant artificiality in all his plays. He invariably sacrifices naturalness on the altar of wit." Unlike honest Diggory—Fag and David vie in wit with their masters. Lucy's cleverness outwits Mrs. Malaprop and her arch-coquetry captivates Sir Lucius. Even the sentimental excrescences of the under-plot do not long interrupt the brilliant vivacity of Sheridan's dialogue.....If "The Rivals" fails to hold the mirror up to nature, it has nevertheless splendid audacity and fertility of dramatic invention and wit. It remains a triumph of artificial comedy. (4) Like Shakespeare, Sheridan borrowed the material of the main plot, characters and situations but these borrowings or parallelisms in characterisation do not in the least detract from his originality. He chose his materials from various sources and welded



them into an artistic whole. (5) "The Rivals" touches the mere surfaces of the civilised middle-class society of Bath in mid eighteenth century, without sounding the depths and the profound realities of life. "It does not reflect a mind seriously concerned over the problems of society as do the plays of Ibsen and Shaw. His business was to write an artificial Comedy of Manners and as such, he dealt with no great human passions—no emotional crises—no storms of the human heart. Hence 'wit rather than humour, brilliancy rather than depth, satire rather than sympathy, art rather than nature, are the characteristics of Sheridan's comedies.'"

### Appreciation

From the above criticism, it is clear that "The Rivals" is not a flawless masterpiece. But it is a miracle as a "first play." It is an artificial Comedy of Manners—a "humour comedy" presenting satirical portraits of characters of a particular segment of society. It is a farcical comedy intended to correct departures from the normal expectations of good behaviour and to satirise the sentimental comedy which had entrenched itself by the middle of the eighteenth century on the English stage. Though professedly an anti-sentimental comedy, it is not an all-out attack against it, as it does contain sentimental elements in the Julia-Faulkland episode. Beneath the anti-sentimental veneer, some of the fundamental concepts of the sentimental comedy can perhaps be traced but, speaking generally, the play as a whole is not sentimental in its impact. "It should be as clear as daylight that in writing these scenes, Sheridan was not making a concession to sentiment but framing an indictment against it." It is very effective on the stage and still remains a favourite with the intellectual elite. It is a comedy which acts far better than it reads. There is nothing interesting about the plot. "The main situation is farcical or at least theatrical—a young spark making love under an assumed name to the very girl designed for him by his irascible father." There is nothing unnatural or improbable about it. The characters belong to the stock, common to comedy and are typical of particular 'humour.' We have no hero or heroine according to the traditional conception—no towering character or dominating figure. All are normal men or women, such as we meet within ordinary society. The only difference is that Sheridan exaggerates the distinctive traits of these 'humour' characters. The very names of the drama-

tis personae suggest their kinship with "humour comedy" of Ben Jonson. Yet the characters are not merely types but also individuals; it is this individuality that makes them more than automatons. Sheridan's method of delineating human character makes him open to the charge of artificiality. Sheridan often exaggerates and sacrifices naturalness on the altar of wit. This wit is best seen in character and the dialogue, which is a significant comic invention. It is the inconstant brilliance of his dialogue that imparts to his play a tone of artificiality. Sheridan transfers the epigrammatic brilliance of his own fine style to the meanest of his characters. If the servants talked as then would do in real life, they would be unbearably dull. With "a nice derangement of epithets," Sheridan makes his Mrs. Malaprop the unrivalled "queen of dictionary." Like Dickens, Sheridan often outlines character with broad strokes that suggest caricature. He lacks subtlety in the analysis of character but he has an exceptional sense of theatrical effectiveness which argues an extraordinary mastery of dramatic art. He seemed to have some innate knowledge of the conventions of the stage. "The immediate popularity of the play lay partly in the skill with which Sheridan combined the wit and elegance of the Restoration pattern, with scenes of sentimentality which could be played straight or treated ironically." It is in the very qualities of sustained buoyancy and the high animal spirits of youth that the enduring charm of the play consists and it is this special feature that has insured its perennial popularity. But it must be said that in spite of its popularity, the higher reaches of the comic drama were beyond Sheridan.

### 8. 'Malapropism'

'Malapropism' is a compound word derived from three French words. 'Mal a propos' which means something 'out of place.' It is defined as 'a ludicrous misuse of word, especially for one resembling it.' This confusion between sets of words is characteristic of Mrs. Malaprop—an immortal creation of Sheridan, fit to occupy a prominent place in the portrait-gallery of comic characters in world-literature. Mrs. Malaprop is a monumental instance of Sheridan's highly developed artificial 'humour' as illustrated in her instinct for 'a nice derangement on epithets.' Yet she is not a mere stock-character as her very name implies but one instinct with life and vitality, which is a measure of the genius of Sheridan.



As a satirical portrait, she stands for (a) the type of the provincial woman of the age in her bid for turning out to be a town-lady by her unconscious and wrong use of high-sounding classical words ; (b) The type of the old aunt, jealous in her guard over her nieces with her ante-diluvian ideas of female education and (c) the type of the old husband-hunting woman who thinks herself charming enough to attract men. Perhaps Sheridan actually met such types during his stay at Bath. Perhaps actual living examples of Mrs. Malaprop with her weaknesses—misuse of classical words, vanity, stupidity, and egoism—were a standing joke in cultured fashionable circles at Bath in real life. Sheridan's constructive skill manifests itself in the way in which he makes this inimitable figure a virtue of necessity.

Sheridan may have taken his model for Mrs. Malaprop from the unforgettable Dogberry of Shakespeare's *'Much Ado About Nothing'* or from his mother's Mrs. Tryfort, another Dogberrian character in her play, *'A Journey to Bath.'* Whatever the source, Mrs. Malaprop is simply unique and remains among a host of dramatic predecessors and imitators, the unrivalled "queen of dictionary."

Typical examples of "Malapropism" may be indicated below :

(1) Her opinion on female education, characteristic of the attitude of the age :

"But, above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy (orthography), that she might not mis-spell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do and likewise that she might reprehend (comprehend) the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know and I don't think there is a superstitious (Superfluous) article in it."

There is unconscious irony in her own opinion in that the language which she employs here, gives us a good indication of the kind of education she herself has received and of her pretension to use learned classical words.

(2) Mrs. Malaprop's violence to "King's English" is extremely diverting and is a source of unending fun. Here is another example of unconscious irony which is virtually a kind of self-condemnation of her egoism and vanity, when she says to Absolute :

“Sure, if I reprehend (comprehend) anything in this world, is the use of my oracular (vernacular) tongue and a nice derangement (arrangement) of epithaps (epithets).”

(3) Like Bob Acres (another instance of highly developed artificial humour—the type of a foolish country-squire aspiring to give himself the airs and looks of a fashionable beau), Mrs. Malaprop has a great stage-part and is always presented in dramatic contrast with other persons who incidentally comment on her “absurdities,” ridiculous vanity “and her dull chat with hard words which she don’t understand,” in terms of which Absolute refers to her in his letter to Lydia, which is intercepted by Mrs. Malaprop.

This is Sir Anthony’s sly comment : “You are truly a moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question” (Act I, Sc. II). She is so muddle-headed, vain, egotistical and so lacking in a sense of humour that she has not the wit to understand the mock compliments of Sir Anthony or Captain Absolute or Sir Lucius. The sly comment of Sir Lucius when he criticises the letter from his Delia : “Here are a great many poor words preessed into the service of this note, that would get their “habeas corpus” from any Court in Christendom.”

Mrs. Mapaprop’s mistakes are many and varied. It seems there is some method in her madness. We may classify them as follows :—

(1) When the sounds of the two words are almost similar except for a syllable or two or a few letters. Examples :

(a) progeny for prodigy ; laconically for ironically ; contagious for contiguous ; commotion for emotion ; superstitious for superfluous ; preposition for proposition ; oracular for vernacular ; epitaph for epithets etc.

(b) Where high sounding and bombastic classical words with meanings different from that of the intended words e. g., illuminate for elucidate ; physiognomy for phraseology ; ineffectual for intellectual etc.

(c) Where she is not very far wrong, the meaning being a little far-fetched or capable of being stretched to bear the meaning intended e. g., alacrity for affability ; dissolve for resolve etc.

(d) Where she happens to use word having a contrary meaning to the one intended e. g., anticipate for retrospection ;



simulation for dissimulation, malevolence for benevolence; derangement for arrangement; ingenuity for ingenuousness.

The above instances are typical. Many more instances can be multiplied.

### 9. Characters of "The Rivals"

*Jack Absolute*—He stands as the most important character, owing to his significance to no special whimsicality, or caprice, but to an innate goodness of heart. He is sincere in his love, and courageous enough to take the consequence of his wooing Lydia without the knowledge of his father. His courage is well-exhibited at the first important interview between the two, when the explosive father finds that the boy is almost as obstinate as himself; the only difference between the two is that the boy is obstinate for something good and noble, that he would not consent to marry unless he knows who the girl is, while the father is obstinate without cause. The courage of the boy is noticeable also when he is challenged, which he accepts quite coolly; both in the challenges and in his love, he contrasts very favourably with the arrant coward, Bob Acres, who acts as a sort of foil. Jack is a young colt, and has something of the father in him, but he is almost fertile in cleverness, and it is by this cleverness only that he is able to carry on the intrigue of love. He, like most of the other characters, is a type, with not much of the soul of the person fully developed. He is intelligent, which is amply evidenced from his finding out all types of subterfuges. He is frank and honest enough to confess and throw up his hands when he knows that the game is up, and wins our sympathy as also our love by being contrasted with others. He will not stoop to anything mean nor will he let down a friend. He is a noble and attractive person.

The remarkable thing to be noticed in 'Characterisation' with Sheridan is that there is no hero or heroine in the real and traditional sense of possessing heroic qualities. There is no towering character at all in Sheridan's farcical comedies, no dominating figure. Jack Absolute may be the hero of this farcical comedy but he is a hero without heroic qualities. Nevertheless, some of the qualities which make him an interesting figure are his strong and healthy commonsense with a practical outlook on men and things, his self-possession, balance, courage, restraint, resourcefulness, ready wit, his romanticism tempered by prudence, his sense of humour etc. He is nothing if not

normal. If he belongs to any type at all, like the eccentric 'humour' characters, he is the type of the normal man such as we come across in society. None of the traits of his character are exaggerated for purposes of satire, for he seems to be the only normal and self-possessed person in the mad world of eccentric characters.

He is level-headed enough to see through the romantic fancies of his beloved although there is a vein of romanticism in his love which tempts him to run away with Lydia when she proposes to him elopement, as Ensign Beverley. In his real self as Captain Absolute, however, he brings to bear on his love-affair, a practical, outlook which makes him fully aware about the importance of money and the value of property, as will be evident from his confidential exchange of opinions in this regard with his friend, Faulkland. He is shrewd of character. He knows his father in and out *e. g.*, he knows that behind the hard crust of dogmatism, authoritarianism and imperiousness, there is an under-current of affection for his son in Sir Anthony Absolute. When his father threatens to disinherit and even disown him as his son, on his refusal to marry the girl of his choice, he waits for a more suitable moment later on when he actually succeeds in winning him over with a pretended patience and submission to his father's will, knowing full well that the girl of his father's choice is no other than his own Lydia on whom he has fastened his affections. His thorough understanding of the real character of Mrs. Malaprop is revealed in his letter to Lydia, intercepted by the former. In this letter, he gives a correct estimate of the character of Mrs. Malaprop, a vain self-important country-woman posing for a learned and fashionable lady of the town. He is a shrewd critic with a keen sense of humour. He is tireless of detecting and criticising departures from the normal expectations of correct and polite behaviour. He takes a kind of mischievous and even malicious delight in exposing the follies and foibles of human conduct. He also sees through the sentimental effusions of Faulkland and the courage of Bob Acres which dwindles to the actual vanishing point when the latter feels his valour "oozing out as it were at the palm of his hands." His ready wit and power of sarcasm make the dialogue, the chief fascination of the play, brilliant. He places his father in a quandry when the latter seeks to thrust a girl of his choice upon his son by putting to him the question: "Would not his father



marry an old or ugly woman merely to please his father?" He is very resourceful and his ready wit enables him to extricate himself from any difficult and unpleasant situation in which he may be placed.

*Faulkland*—On the other hand, this person is a mere shadow of a man, for he stands before us as no more than a symbol of a fault or defect. He is Suspicion and Doubt writ large, and is, thus, the author of all his supposed misfortune. Perhaps he is not convinced of his own real worth. In any case, he almost loses Julia through his own folly—or even stupidity. He suspects her sincerity and tries to invent all sorts of causes. His brain is fertile in misinterpreting Julia's noble words, and he is not likely to be even happy with a temperament, whose defects he is fully conscious of, but which he is powerless to curb or control. He seems to relish being miserable and his fault was when he tried to test Julia's sincerity by a pretence that he was doomed. That merely shows to what extent a suspicious mind can go, and only the sudden turn of the tables from Julia could or can restore him to a more balanced attitude towards her—if at all anything can. There is nothing much to appreciate in him, for he is almost a cypher.

Faulkland is the hero of the Julia-Faulkland under-plot. The emotional refinements and outbursts of these two characters, particularly those of the former, are quite in the style of the sentimental drama. Both introduce the sentimental elements in the play, which is responsible for making "The Rivals" popular in the eighteenth century though later critics have criticised it. Faulkland is a 'humour' character in whom jealousy is carried to comic exaggeration. From the way, Sheridan has drawn this character, it is as clear as daylight that he was not making a concession to popular sentiment but framing an indictment, his object being mainly to satirise the sentimental element. Except for the Faulkland-Julia episode, the remainder of the play is wholly in the comic vein. The way Sheridan combines the wit and elegance of a "manners" comedy, freed from all immodesty of the Restoration pattern, with scenes of sentimentality, treated ironically, is really remarkable.

Faulkland, indeed, is a true sentimentalist of the school generally condemned by Sheridan, but in all the scenes in which he appears without Julia, and in those in which he appears with her, he is treated in a spirit of genuine comedy; his 'humour' rouses much less sympathy than laughter. Julia,

however, is never laughable, except in so far as she heightens the ludicrousness of Faulkland.

Faulkland is the perfect embodiment of sentiment. He has an innate tendency to be swayed by feeling rather than reason, commonsense, sense of proportion and patience. He always carries with him "a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain;" according to the estimate of Captain Absolute. All this proceeds from the romantic conception of himself as the ideal lover; his theory of love, and his jealous, capricious, and suspicious nature. According to him, the ideal lover must be delicately sensitive in his soul and sets the store of his happiness by entertaining the company of only one person. In this respect also, he is a foil to Captain Absolute who may transfer his love for Lydia to another girl if he fails to win her love whereas Faulkland has "set the sun of happiness on this cast and not to succeed were to be stript of all." Such a fanciful conception of love is the origin of his self-torture, his self-love and self-criticism. It makes him unnecessarily exacting and suspicious of Julia's love for him. He tortures himself as well as Julia with his caprices. He is nothing if not inconstant and capricious in nature. He is always ill at ease and uneasy in his love-affair *e. g.*, now he doubts the depth and sincerity of the love of Julia but the very next moment he curses himself for unnecessarily torturing his beloved. Now he is worried about the health of his beloved but as soon as he is told that she was in perfect enjoyment of her health and spirits, he wishes, she was not "too happy" after all, for, according to his theory, "the mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers, is compact, that no smile shall live till they meet again." All this drives him to the conclusion that perhaps Julia does not love him enough. Comparing men's with women's love, he believes that the latter is influenced by good fortune and handsomeness in men. But when he is assured by Julia that none of these considerations has influenced her great love for Faulkland, as she has seen fairer youths than he but does not care for them, in spite of their handsome features, he is depressed to think that he is not considered fair enough for her love and that she perhaps loves him out of a feeling of gratitude for having saved her life. Thus Faulkland invariably tends to imagine trouble while none really existed. In this way, he goes on tormenting himself and Julia with fanciful grievances which have no founda-



tion in fact till the breaking-point is reached when Julia gets thoroughly disgusted with him and wants to break him in utter despair, on learning that Faulkland's story of having killed a man in a duel for which he must fly from his country, is pure fiction, intended to test her sincerity in love for him. Fortunately for him at this critical stage of their love-relations, his self-criticism comes to his help and acts as a kind of safety-value, relieving the excessive pressure of strain on his excited state of mind, and he blames himself for his extremely jealous and suspicious nature. At long last, he is cured of his jealousy and is reconciled to Julia.

Faulkland's minor qualities should not be lost sight of while making a just estimate. He is chivalrous enough to have saved the life of a young lady in a boat-disaster at some personal risk. When Julia expresses her gratefulness to him for this chivalrous act, the idea of loving him through gratitude highly displeases Faulkland who would have her love to him for his own sake. He is a generous and trust-worthy friend to Captain Absolute. All his faults proceed "from what he calls the delicacy and warmth of his affection," according to the estimate of Sir Anthony Absolute.

*Sir Anthony Absolute*—He is almost a typical John Bull,—obstinate, hot-tempered, given to a good life of eating and drinking, very self-willed, a sort of typical old-type squire but not at all bad at heart ! He is not very delicate in his tastes or talk, and his suggestion and confession in Act IV, Sc ii, where he says :

"Sir Anthony—Ha ! Ha ! Ha !—ha ! ha ! ha !—Now I see it—Ha ! Ha ! Ha !—now I see it !—you have been too lively, Jack."

and further—

"Come, no excuses, Jack ;—why, your father, you rogue, was so before you :—the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient.—Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! poor little Lydia !—why you've frightened her, you dog, you have."

It smacks of a definite low taste and vulgarity. But that is Sir Anthony's way. He had no deeps and no hidden sides to his character. He is as hot-tempered as he is jolly, and can sometimes meet the young on their level, without giving himself airs of superiority. He almost acts as a compromiser, when

everything seems to go wrong. He is not only Bohemian in habits occasionally, but is cheerful enough, and is the source of the only words of heartiness that come from any character. His jokes, even against Mrs. Malaprop, are not too biting, as when he says :—

“Gad! Sir, I like your spirits; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.”

In fine, we like Sir Anthony, with all the faults which are so apparent, for the simple reason that he is what he is and makes no pretences and has no ill-natured attitude.

The very name of the character, Sir Anthony Absolute, suggests its kinship with ‘humour comedy’ of Ben Jonson and accentuation of an individual trait viz., the type of self-willed, authoritative father of the conservative school who believes in keeping an iron hand over his son, in boyhood as in his youth and on young persons generally and who is nothing, if not dogmatic, and absolute in his opinion about female education which he considers extremely harmful. In his boyhood, he knocked his son down if he ever refused to carry out his orders. He persists in maintaining the same attitude towards his son in all affairs of life including marriage. His son must marry the girl of his choice, even if the girl were ugly. He is hasty in everything as Fag says of him: “Ay, ay, hasty in everything or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute.” He would go to the length of disinheriting and disowning his son, if he persisted in refusing to marry the rich heiress of his choice. He has certain decided views on men and things and he would not change his opinion at anybody’s counter-suggestion. Female education is harmful: “I’d as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet.” He is definitely against circulating libraries: “a circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge.” He is severe on young persons generally and is all for keeping an iron-hand over them. He advised Mrs. Malaprop to keep a tight hand over the self-willed Lydia, her ward—even to keep her under lock and key without food for several days.

But inspite of the veneer of obduracy, dogmatism and imperiousness, there is an under-current tenderness, love for his son and kindly considerations for the feelings of others with whom he comes in contact in life. This aspect of his character



is brought out in his conduct towards his son. Even when roused to a frenzy, he is apt to cool down. If he is allowed to have his own way and is not thwarted in his wishes, "he is compliance itself," as he describes his true nature himself in his own words: "But take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted ; no one more easily led—when I have my own way : but don't put me in frenzy etc." He is highly pleased with his son when the latter surrenders his will to that of his father pretending to be penitent after learning that the lady of his heart is the same as his father has chosen to be his bride. Behind his insistence on his son's marrying the rich heiress of his choice, there lies his anxiety to see his son settled down in life with a honourable competence. Even in his old age, he is susceptible to female charm and beauty. So while he is anxious to secure for his son a beautiful wife, he is also alive to the importance of financial gain that would accrue to him if she is also an heiress. As a shrewd worldly-minded landlord, he has his eye on the acquisition of fresh property through his son's marriage in a wealthy family so as to ensure the security of his own estate.

In his younger days, he was a jolly romantic sort of young man who had contracted a love-marriage and who was a bold intriguer for beauty. His present somewhat detailed description of Lydia's physical charms, unmistakably proves his bias towards beauty even in his old age. Noticing his son's affected indifference to beauty, he goes to the length of suggesting that if his son would not care to marry such a girl, he will marry her himself.

He is a cultured baronet. He has a keen sense of humour. He is witty in his repartees. He is nothing short of brilliance in the exchange of words. He is also gifted with the power of sarcasm,—“a touch of caustic wit.” He never uses vulgar language towards Mrs. Malaprop, who is lacking in feminine delicacy. He is gently ironical when he very cleverly comments on her vanity in these terms : “I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer.” When, at the end of the play, every one is satisfied at the happy turn of events with the single exception of the discomfited Mrs. Malaprop, it was Sir Anthony who alone cheers the downcast widow saying : “You are in your bloom yet.” He is gently ironical when while proposing to drink health to the young couples, he wishes a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

*Lydia*—She is again a type. Most of the characters are from the traditional types prevalent in literature in general, as much in dramas, as in novels etc. She is fantastically romantic—a queer creature, full of bookish fancies about love and elopement and is rather soft-headed! There seems to be no special appeal in her and why Jack should have chosen to fall in love with her, passes one's comprehension. Living in a dream—she goes on day-dreaming, and even towards the end, she is sorry that there is going to be no elopement! She requires to be cured and Julia does to Lydia, what Jack does to Faulkland! She is a capricious girl, who is a good deal spoilt by either being fondled, or because of Mrs. Malaprop's lack of proper control. The change which takes place in her, towards the end of the drama, seems to be too sudden, and rather far-fetched, as she has given no indication of such qualities in her previously. But her foolishness is innocent, not malicious.

Sheridan satirised the heroine of Sentimental Comedy in the person of Lydia Languish, who is ready to die with disappointment when the 'prettiest distress, imaginable,' and the prospect of one of the most sentimental elopements seem about to fade into the common light of conventional matrimony. Find visions of so becoming a disguise....So amiable a ladder of Ropes...Conscious moon...four horses...Scotch parson...with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop...and such paragraphs in the Newspapers, are prosaically shattered by her Aunt's consent and approbation." The dear delicious shifts to gain a moment's interview with her lover are now only a memory. "How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue. There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically. He shivering with cold, and I with apprehension and while the freezing blast numb'd our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour...Ah Julia! That was something like being in love."

Lydia Languish is, in fact, more than a whimsical exaggeration of the heroine of Sentimental Comedy. She is, as Mrs. Malaprop might say, "the very fine apple of sentimentality." The accentuation of the particular trait of character emphasised by the word 'languish' in the heroine of the play is that she is pining away in a depressed state of mind with her romantic and sentimental conception of life and love and amourously



looking forward to some romantic elopement with her young and gallant lover.

This conception of love is the direct result of her reading a lot of cheap sentimental and romantic novels which deal with thrilling adventures, elopements, secret love-affairs, run-away marriages, without the consent of guardians, sensational amours published under blazing headlines in newspapers etc. Through habitual indulgence in her passion for reading this kind of literature, she has developed her conception of love. This has turned her head and she has become somewhat unbalanced in her views on men and things and capricious in her mind. She became what may be called a spoilt child, having had a free hand in many things till she came under the guardianship of Mrs. Malaprop, the typical old aunt, who thinks she has the right to intermediate her ward by a set of formulas, beginning with: "What has a young woman to do with...etc." Lydia revolted against the high-handed manner in which her aunt sought to control her movements. The constant watchfulness to which she was subjected by her unsympathetic aunt, engendered in her capricious mind a kind of opposition to the latter's will. Her rebellious nature taught her to deceive all her vigilance and hurt her sense of prudish decency and gentility. Her somewhat foolish obstinacy in persisting her course of action, is accounted for, by the opposition and hardness of heart of Mrs. Malaprop. She is so full of romantic passion that she takes leave of her common-sense and rational judgment while thinking of her elopement and run-away marriage with a poor but romantic lover—a half-pay Ensign in preference to a rich young man viz., Captain Absolute. Captain Absolute knows her caprice very well and so he woos her as Ensign Beverley. She is in great anger for the deception practised on her by Captain Absolute, pretending to be Beverley because of the frustration of her romantic plan of elopement, about which Lydia subsequently speaks to Julia whose admonitions correct her and bring her to her senses. Her love for Beverley is genuine and though she jilts him as Captain Absolute for shattering her dreams, she becomes highly perturbed at the news of the impending duel in which the life of her lover is in danger and rushes at once to the place of the duel to prevent it.

*Julia*—She is very well-contrasted with Lydia. As a matter of fact, the pairs—Julia and Lydia, and Jack and Faulkland—are evenly matched, for one of the two is lopsided! Julia is really like 'Patience on a movement.' She seems to have the

patience of Job in her dealing with Faulkland, and the change which we are promised in Faulkland's behaviour,—his reformation—is all due to her goodness. She is noble-minded, utterly sincere in her love for Faulkland, which is not the result of gratitude! She is patient in her hour of difficulties—her trials and tribulations—and in face of the continuously strange, diffident, suspicious, doubting behaviour of Faulkland, maintains a calmness of attitude and behaviour which wins our sympathies, as much as it turns us against Faulkland. As a matter of fact, it is a weakness with her—this continuous patience even against sufficient cause. If she had flared up earlier, the reformation of Faulkland would have begun earlier also. But her fault is this excess of self-immolation. And we are given—almost dramatically—a scene where she behaves in a manner almost inconsistent with her character! But she has justification, for even a worm would recoil under such provocation.

Julia is the heroine of the sentimental under-plot—the Faulkland-Julia episode. She is intended as a foil to the sentimental Lydia of the main plot, who is her friend and cousin. It is through the instrumentality of the plain, matter-of-fact and level-headed Julia that Lydia's absurd romantic passion is ultimately corrected. She is the female counterpart of Captain Absolute who brings to bear on the action of the play a commonsense approach to all life-problems. She does not belong strictly to the "humour" group of characters in which certain individual traits are accentuated by the dramatist, following the example of Ben Jonson. She is the embodiment of "oppressed innocence" or "long-suffering patience." She suffers undeserved tortures at the hands of her capricious lover, Faulkland whose jealousy, carried to comic exaggeration, is ultimately corrected by her. She makes two valuable contributions to the action of the play by correcting both Lydia and Faulkland. She advises capricious Lydia not to reject her lover who genuinely loves her even at the risk of the frustration of her romantic dreams. She condones the faults of her own lover with a beautiful excuse: "His affection is ardent and sincere, and, as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought, and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his." It is only when she is driven to desperation by his suspicions that her patience reaches the breaking-point and she repudiates him and tells him point-blank that she will no longer stand his insult; but



even then she promises never to accept any other suitor.

*Mrs. Malaprop*—Mrs. Malaprop has become immortal and has given a word to literature—"Malapropism." Her name indicates what she stands for; for the word '*mal a propos*' stands for 'anything said unreasonably, or unsuitably.' She is a type, having no special feature except that she is expert in the most improper use of words, and these come most naturally from her mouth. She however is made more ridiculous by her love-affairs, which Sheridan thrust upon her,—for there seems to be no cause for this humiliation. Other characters before her in literature have used words in an improper context—but none of them has been held up to ridicule like Mrs. Malaprop, for she is almost pilloried before all of us. But she is a foolish vain woman and her exposure is partially deserved. She is one of those about whom the psalmist says: "They have eyes, but see not." For under her very nose, things are happening which she cannot see—or if she sees, she cannot diagnose correctly.

Mrs. Malaprop occupies a prominent place in the portrait-gallery of comic characters in world-literature. Her violent outrages on language are extremely diverting. She remains among a host of dramatic predecessors and imitators, the unrivalled 'queen of dictionary' with her 'nice derangement of epithets.' Her muddle-headedness, loquacity, self-conceit, egotism, vanity, consciousness of superior knowledge, arising out of what she considers use of learned words and, above all, her frantic attempts at husband-hunting, followed by her discomfiture, make her an unforgettable character. Sheridan reaches the climax of farcical exaggeration in delineating her character which also marks the triumph of effective dramatic art.

Both Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres are caricatures, grotesque oddities and embodiments of stupendous fatuity. They are the work of genius. Like Acres, Mrs. Malaprop has a great stage-part to act. The main action is developed through a constant succession of effective stage-situations in which Mrs. Malaprop has an important part to play. Although she is not the heroine of the play, she usurps more attention and evokes more interest than any other character in the drama.

*Bob Acres*—Like Mrs. Malaprop, Bob Acres is the male counterpart of the foolish country-squire, aspiring to be a man of fashion by imitating the manners and putting on the imposing dress of a beau, through which he foolishly thinks he can

compete with Captain Absolute on equal terms for the love of Lydia.

Sheridan introduces two highly developed artificial humours in the oath referential or sentimental swearing of Bob Acres and in Mrs. Malaprop's "nice derangement of epithets." Bob Acres thinks this enough to swagger to give himself the airs of a city-bred and fashionable gallant and to indulge in high-sounding oaths, while at heart he is a coward. His courage fails him when he is egged on to send out a challenge to Beverley by the intriguing adventurer, 'O Trigger. The courage of Bob Acres dwindles to the actual vanishing-point, when he "feels his valour oozing out, as it were, at the palms of his hands" but the very exaggeration of cowardice enhances the acting possibilities of the duel-scene. The coward, reluctantly engaged in a duel, is one of the oft-repeated situations of the stage, but nowhere is it worked out so effectively as in this play. Farcical exaggeration reaches a climax in Bob Acres as in Mrs. Malaprop.

*Sir Lucius 'O Trigger*—He is definitely a 'humour' character, as his very name suggests kinship with Ben Jonson's 'humour comedy.' His humour is love of fighting, representing a typical Irish adventurer of the time, out to mend his fortune by marriage with a rich heiress, whom he knows under the romantic name of 'Delia' while in reality Mrs. Malaprop is the person who is the author of the 'love-letters' that passed through the roguish maid-servant, Lucy. His pride, sense of delicacy and self-respect would not permit him to retrieve his fallen fortunes by marrying the rich old widow, Mrs. Malaprop, simply for the sake of money, when he discovers that his 'Delia' is no other than Mrs. Malaprop. The cunning and roguish maid of Mrs. Malaprop, Lucy, gives a true estimate of his character when she remarks, "Though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortune." His love of intrigue in love induces him to incite Bob Acres to send out a challenge to Beverley to fight a duel with him, as he is ready to take affront at the conduct of Captain Absolute for insulting his country and fight with the latter with the real object of removing him as a rival to the love of Lydia, whom he knows as his "Delia." When the bubble is pricked, he gracefully gives up his claim to Lydia. He is rather severe on the middle-aged widow, Mrs. Malaprop when he offers to make a free gift of her to Captain Absolute and Acres sarcastically



and would have nothing to do with her. He is a thorough-going duellist, a blood-thirsty Philistine." Fighting duels is a kind of pastime with him. He is generous enough to make up his quarrel with Absolute and ultimately gives up his claim to Lydia gracefully and without a fight.

*Fag*—Fag is the type of the faithful personal servant of the comedies. He gets to know the secrets of his master in regard to the girl to whom the latter is paying courtship but is careful to safeguard his interests in every possible way. He extracts from Lucy, the information that Lydia, the girl, chosen by Sir Anthony for his son and loses no time in informing his master of this happy coincidence. He has imbibed the elegance, smartness and the wit of his master by his long association with him. He is head and shoulders above the other servants of his class by virtue of his capacity for wit and humour and superior knowledge. He invents lies to explain away the presence of his master at Bath to his father.

*David*—Like Fag, he is also sincerely devoted to his master and jealously guards his interests under all circumstances. But in every other respect, he is a foil to Fag in that he is simple, straightforward and an altogether a delightful character with his oaths, simple dress, and country-bred manners. He cannot take kindly to the atmosphere of intrigue and the danger to life, consequent on the tendency to decide disputes by duelling. He can understand fighting with a staff or cudgel but not with swords or pistols, which, more often than not, means danger to life. He looks forward to the day when he will be able to take his master to his mother and his country-home, safe and sound, from the intriguing atmosphere of Bath. He knows that his master is no good at fighting duels and does everything in his power to dissuade and prevent him from fighting to which he is tempted by O' Trigger, "the blood-thirsty Philistine."

*Lucy*—Lucy is the cunning and roguish maid of Mrs. Malaprop, feminine counterpart of Fag in point of wit, capacity for fun and mischief, being privy to the secrets of her mistress. She deludes her mistress into thinking that she is a very simple and faithful maid. She cheats Sir Lucius into thinking that all his love-letters are being safely delivered to "Delia." She is good at earning her "tops" by betraying or keeping the secrets of others with whom she has to deal. She has an important role to play in the 'exposition' and 'complication' of the drama. She

provides the link or medium through whom love-intrigues are carried on by the two pairs of lovers. It is through her lips that Fag learns about the identity of the girl intended to be the future bride of Captain Absolute. She is a deliberate and conscious villain who takes a pride in describing how she has been bribed by various parties served by her.

The other characters need no detailed discussion for they are too insignificant to be given that prominence.

### 10. Criticism of "The Rivals"

Sheridan came to prominence—and a sudden one, too—as a result of this fascinating comedy. And though on the first night it failed, because of a bad cast, its revised presentation won for him an applause which has been continued till now. The sheer pleasure at the talk of Mrs. Malaprop, the oaths of Bob, the bragging of that fool, the irritable, Sir Absolute etc., was too great a pleasure to permit dispassionate appreciation or appraisal of the drama. This was possible only when people were able to think seriously and calmly, and at leisure. Time has, however, shown the flaws of the comedy which are all too real. The plot is hackneyed and the intrigue is not of a high order. It is true that love-intrigues throughout the ages have always taken this pattern, more or less, and the services of the maid-servant or man-servant have always been there to assist the mistress or the master. But, all the same, it only shows that he is not original. It may be argued that he was too young when he wrote *The Rivals*—he was hardly 24 years of age when he arranged this. But Dickens had written the immortal *Pickwick Papers* when he was 24; Jane Austen had composed and finished her *Pride and Prejudice* when she was only 21 years of age, which has been admitted into the ranks of the classics; Marlowe had written his *Tamburlaine* when he was 23. Each of these writers had shown that they could invent a new game. Sheridan was not such a great dramatic genius. And yet the drama holds the stage even now.

What are the causes of its popularity? Firstly, the sparkling conversation, which always was a feature of Sheridan's talk and conversation, in society, and which he exhibits here in print almost for the first time with all the pleasure and joy of literary craftsman. The talk between the characters may not be always true to their nature; sometimes the servants are not only too clever for their masters, but speak a language which would



puzzle a well-read man. But this talk never is dull, never sinks into flatness and boresomeness and the reader as well as the hearer is carried away, floating on its sound, as very much later, at the end of the nineteenth century, people were to be carried away by Oscar Wilde's brilliance. Then secondly, though the characters are hackneyed and traditional as well as conventional, they still appear charming. The classical comedy of Plautus and Terence had supplied the European drama with models of characters and plots, which was the staple of Latin comedy and later on, other dramas for a very long time. The irate and irrational father, the intriguing lovers, the rascally servant, who assists his master's plans and intrigue and lifts his purse in the bargain, the gull and the braggart—these are too old—as old as the beginnings of European comedy. Even in English drama,—in Shakespeare and elsewhere,—We have reminiscences of such types. But still, there is pleasure in seeing Sir Anthony talk as he does, when he says :

“If not, Zounds ! don't enter the same hemisphere with me ! don't dare to breathe the same air, or use same light with me : but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own ! I'll strip you of your commission : I'll lodge a five-and-three pence in the hands of trustees. and you shall live on the interest—I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you ! and, and—damn me, if ever I call you Jack again !”

or,

“*Abs.* Sir, you see a penitent before you.

*Sir Anthony.* I see an impudent scoundrel before me.” which is soon-after followed by the charming reconciliation :

“Why, now you talk sense—absolute sense—I never heard anything more sensible in my life,—confound you, you shall be Jack again !”

or the most hypocritical pretence of Jack :

“Malaprop ! Languish ! I don't remember even to have heard the names before. Yet, stay—I think I do recollect some thing.—*Languish ! Languish !* She squints, don't she ;—A little, red-haired girl ?”

—This sort of talk is always sure to make the audience pleased and happy, and Sheridan gives plenty of it. Besides, the humour is not cruel, even to Mrs. Malaprop. For, cruelty is false when the person against whom the remarks are made, is utterly undeserv-

ing of them. The character of Mrs. Malaprop was long ago anticipated, when we heard Dogberry complain of his place, not being suspected, nor his years, when he reminds Conrade that the latter, a villain, was full of piety, as also when he tells Count Claudio that he would be condemned to everlasting redemption for this. We had also Bottom who tells us that "there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living," when he asks Quince to call each of the company generally, and was prepared to speak in a monstrous little voice, when he was prepared to roar as gently as any sucking dove, as it were a nightingale. Launcelot has also been telling Bassanio how his father would fruitify into Bassanio, regarding the suit which was impertinent to himself, about the very defect of his suit! And yet Mrs. Malaprop carries this whole talk through the length of the drama, though sometimes, even we, who are able to enjoy heartily, feel that the words are occasionally forced for a woman could speak correctly the following sentence :

"Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on."

is not likely to say

"you forfeit my malevolence for ever."

Though Mrs. Malaprop can be easily believed when she speaks:

"Come, girls!—this gentleman will exhort us—Come Sir, You're our envoy—lead the way, and will precede."

Still, it is difficult that even she would misuse 'perpendiculars' for 'particulars.' But all this criticism is arm-chair criticism. In the theatre, the audience is carried away by the laughter and humour produced.

The characters, thus, are not only non-original, but are mere types, which means that they move in a set groove of behaviour. As individuals, they should have a distinctive mark of their own. We find that in Bottom, in Darcy of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice;" we find that in a thousand other instances, but not here. Given the type, the rest of the behaviour follows. Any irritable man would behave normally like Sir Anthony; an over-suspicious man would behave like Faulkland, and sentimental young girl dream of elopements and clandestine marriages like Lydia. And yet, with this open admission of the characters being conventional, we may as well state also that there is a deal of charm in the cleverness of Jack, who will always be Jack to



us, no matter whether Sir Anthony disowns or is reconciled to him—a delicate pathos in Julia's complete faith and sincere love for Faulkland, which add grace and beauty to the drama.

*The Rivals* has another and a very great advantage over the Restoration comedy which it has succeeded on the stage. The Restoration Dramatists—Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, Wycherley, Etherege,—were not men of delicate tastes. Congreve is too great a name to be mixed up in the group, but he belongs to the period and comes and goes with the period. The hidden pleasure, the allusions which are mischievous and definitely sexual, even immoral, but by indelicate insinuations, are no longer to be found. Perhaps Steele and Goldsmith had already improved the taste of the people. Perhaps the times have completely changed. The court-influence of Charles II and his mistresses and his courtiers and the ilk was no longer there to pollute life. There was a great sobering influence—that of Dr. Johnson—who walked and talked during an important period of this century. We thus find that through Goldsmith and Sheridan, a lesson was retaught,—that it was not necessary to be obscene and vulgar to produce comedy, that these are not fundamental to the creation of comedy, nor are they the chief servants of the Comic Spirit. To have this is to have achieved much. To have given such innocent pleasure to the audience where the noble or cultured ladies need not blush with burning shame, not be required to hide their faces behind their fans.—This was to have achieved a revolution in dramatic taste. True, the credit does not go entirely to these two. But a large portion of honour is due to them and it is one of the chief claims of Sheridan that he did not allow himself to be enticed by cheaper methods or models to produce cheap stuff.

Thus, all told, the coming of Sheridan with *The Rivals* symbolises a new taste. And this drama must be read in close comparison with the others of the author—for these merely continue the discovery of creating comedy through farce, but not through vulgarity, where the master Congreve is matched in dialogue and repartee without wickedness and the sin of the innuendoes of the master.

### 11. Critics on "The Rivals"

*Taine*—"His comedies were comedies of society, the most amusing ever written, but merely comedies of society. Imagine exaggerated caricatures, artists are wont to improvise in a draw-

ing-room where they are intimate, about eleven in the evening. His first play, *The Rivals*.....loaded with these, and scarce anything else. There is Mrs. Malaprop, a silly pretentious woman, who uses grand words higgledy-piggledy, delighted with herself, in a "nice derangement of epitaphs, before her names, and declaring that her niece is as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." There is Mr. Acres, who suddenly becomes a hero, gets engaged in the duel and being led on the ground, calculates the effect of the balls, thinks of his will, burial, embalmment, and wishes he were at home. There is another in the person of a clumsy and cowardly servant, of an irascible and brawling father, of a sentimental and domestic young lady, of a touchy Irish duellist. All this jogs and jostles, on, without much order, amid the surprises of a twofold plot, by aid of expedients and *recontres*, without the full and regular government of a dominating idea. But in vain one perceives it is a patch-work. The high spirit carries off everything; we laugh heartily; every single scene has its facetious and rapid movement; we forget that the clumsy valet makes remarks as worthy as Sheridan himself, and there the irascible gentleman speaks as well as the most elegant of writers. The play-wright is also a man of letters if, through mere animal and social spirits, he wishes to amuse others and to amuse himself, he does not forget the interests of his talent and the care for his reputation. He has taste, he appreciates refinements of style, the worth of a new image, of a striking contrast, of a witty and well-considered insinuation. He has above all, wit, a wonderful conversational wit, the art of rousing and sustaining the attention, of being sharp, varied, of taking his hearers unawares, of throwing in a repartee, of setting folly in relief, or accumulating one after another witticisms and happy phrases. He brought himself subsequently to speak of it as his worst play....."

*Prof. F. Tupper and Prof. James Tupper*—"The interest of *The Rivals* is primarily theatrical. The play has successfully held the stage from its second performance with Quick as Acres to its modern presentation with Joseph Jefferson in the same role.....the connection of the sub-plot with the main plot is, moreover, so slight that no loss is experienced as a result of amputation. Even though Faulkland's fine-spun jealousies are the object of mild ridicule and though he serves as foil to the romantic Lydia, the audience, which has to listen to the utter-



ance of his self-torturing suspicions will inevitably be bored. But in the main plot, there is not a dull moment. The audience from the first is led into the Absolute-Beverley secret, and it soon learns of the trick that is being played on Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Lucius O' Trigger. Rejoicing in its superior knowledge it is delighted in seeing how the mystified characters act in the complications which they could not foresee. So we have the highly comic scenes of Acres arousing Faulkland's jealousy about Julia ; of Sir Anthony's proposing a marriage to his son each working at cross purposes, of Lucy's duplicities, of Captain Absolute appeasing his father, of his posing as Beverley and thus securing Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia and of his own discomfiture at the revelation of his pose ; of Acres challenging Beverley and of the final clearing up on the duelling field. We are tickled when we see some persons who think they are controlling events caught by their own cleverness and others seem to be the victims of circumstance, blundering into good luck ; we laugh when a person for whom a trap is laid, walks promptly into it, or when two characters wholly misunderstand each other, and appear highly ridiculous to all but themselves ; and we are vastly entertained when Bob Acres tries to bolster up a sinking courage and is treated as if he were a reckless fire-eater.

We have likewise the same theatrical pleasure in the characters and their words as we have in their actions. Sir Anthony's choleric temper will always amuse any audience ; Bob Acres with his referential oaths and his inflated courage, is a perpetual joy ; Mrs. Malaprop deranges "epitaphs" to the unfailing delight of all who hear aspersions cast on her parts of speech. One is hurried along with such speed in the constant bustle of the action and the rapid fire of dialogue that no time remains to question the reasonableness of the characters or their speeches. Apart from the excitement of the theatre, one realizes that Sir Anthony is made more precipitate than he would be in actual life, that Bob Acres manages his account of Julia's conduct too well for the occasion and that he manufactures oaths too cleverly for the blockhead he is, that Mrs. Malaprop is so much the 'queen of dictionary' that one sees designs on the part of her creator. But on the broad, Sheridan's cleverness captures his audience before it has time to protest.

The exuberance of Sheridan's humour, indeed, carries his audience off its feet. It has all the marks of youth and genius. "Rather," as Brander Matthews says, "the frank feeling for fun

and appreciation of the incongruous.....than the deeper and broader humour which we see at its full in Moliere and Shakespeare. One fully realizes that the leading characters are superficially portrayed—Sir Anthony, Mrs. Malaprop and Acres,—that Sheridan does not touch in this play the springs of laughter that lie so close to the springs of tears. A youth of twenty-three could not plumb such comic depths or by means of humorous revelations make us know a man like Falconbridge or Falstaff. The humour of *The Rivals* is more “abundantly laughter-compelling” than the extremely clever wit of *The School for Scandal*. Indeed, Sheridan in the earlier play, seems more like the youthful Shakespeare of the rollicking comedies while in the later plays, he resembles the finished artist of the Restoration Comedy who wrote *The Way of The World*.”

*Legouis and Cazamian*—“*The Rivals* is a youthful and gay comedy of no great substance, but one in which the joyous fancy of the author creates an atmosphere of almost poetical unreality: over a background of invitation—memories of the Restoration, and Moliere—there stand out figures that are new, or appear to be so. Without daring to disappoint the public completely in its sentimental expectation, the play outlines in the name of sound reason-reaction of temperament-taste against a whole range of pre-Romantic preference.”

*Saintsbury*—...“but his three best pieces are of extraordinary merit. They were all produced between 1775 and 1779; each is a masterpiece of its kind and the kinds are not identical. *The Rivals* is an artificial comedy, inclining on one side to farce, and on the parts of Faulkland and Julia, to the sentimental. But it is, on its rather artificial plan, constructed with remarkable skill and tightness: and the characters of Sir Anthony Absolute, Mrs. Malaprop, Sir Lucius O’ Trigger and Bob Acres, with almost all the rest, combine fun with at least theatrical verisimilitude in a very rare way. Indeed, Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop, though heightened from life, can hardly be said to be false to it, and though in the other pair, because of dramatic exaggeration is pushed to its farthest, it is not exceeded. The effect could not have been produced without the sparkling dialogue, but this alone could not have given it.”

“In *The Rivals*, Sheridan had vied with Vanbrugh and had beaten him.”

*H. V. Routh* (in the “*Cambridge History of English Literature*”):



“*The Rivals* (1775) is a comedy of incident, the excellence of which is partly to be found in the action. Its characterisation is, in essence, conventional and shows less knowledge of human nature than does Goldsmith’s work. Captain Absolute, the generous, impulsive youth; Sir Anthony, the testy, headstrong father; Fag and Lucy, the menials who minister to their employers’ intrigues, are as old as Latin comedy; Bob Acres, the blustering coward, is akin to Sir Andrew Aguecheek and had trod the stage in Jonson’s learned sock; Sir Lucius O’ Trigger is related to Cumberland O’ Flaherty; Mrs. Malaprop has a long pedigree, including Dogberry, Lady Froth, Mrs. Slipslop, and Tabitha Bramble; yet, apart from the actual business on the stage, these characters are irresistibly effective. As in the case of Goldsmith, Sheridan’s importance is found in the new wine which he poured into old bottles. The Georgian public expected in their plays a certain poignancy, which should remind them of their social or domestic life. But whereas authors of the sentimental school, flavoured their work with emotions pertaining to woman’s affairs, Sheridan perceived that there was another element of good breeding, quite different but equally modern.....Drawing-room diplomacy had often appeared in letters and memoirs; but Sheridan was the first writer to make it the essence of a play. Despite the conventionality of the character-drawing and of some of the situations, *The Rivals* has an atmosphere that satisfies this ideal. As each figure moves and speaks on the stage, the reader is conscious of a coterie whose shibboleth was distinction—a coterie whose conversation regarded the most commonplace-topics as worthy of its wit, which abhorred eccentricity and smiled at all those who, like Fag, Sir Anthony, Faulkland, Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres, fell short of the rule of easy self-possession.”

*Mrs. Oliphant*—“*The Rivals* to the ordinary spectator..... is so little like a transcript from any actual conditions of humanity that to consider it as studied from life would be absurd, and we receive these creations of fancy as belonging to a world, entirely apart from the real. But the reader who has accompanied Sheridan through the previous chapter of his story will be inclined, on the contrary, to feel that the young dramatist has but selected a few incidents, from the still more curious comedy of life.....in which elopements, deals, secret correspondences, and all the rest of the simple artificial rounds were the order of the day.....*The Rivals* is no such picture of

life in Bath as that which, half a century later, in altered times—which yet were full of humours of their own,—Miss Austen made for us in all the modest flutter of youthful life and hopes. Sheridan's brilliant dramatic sketch is slight in comparison, though far more instantly effective, and with a concentration in its sharp effects which the stage requires.....Scarcely ever was a play so full of liveliness and interest constructed upon a slighter machinery. The Rivals of the title, by means of the most simple yet amusing of mystifications, are one person..... Thus the whole action of the piece turns upon a mystification which affords some delightfully comic scenes, but few of those occasions of suspense and uncertainty which give interest to the drama. This we find in the brisk and delightful movement of the piece, in the broad but most amusing sketches of character, and the unfailing wit and sparkle of the dialogue.....So completely do Sir Anthony's fits of temper and Mrs. Malaprop's fine language and stately presence and the swagger of Bob Acres occupy and amuse us. Even Faulkland, jealous and doubting... ..is so laughable in his starts aside, at every new suggestion of jealous fancy.....

Mrs. Malaprop's ingenious "derangement of epitaphs" is her chief distinction to the popular critic and even though such a great competitor as Dogberry has occupied the ground before her, these delightful absurdities have never been surpassed.....Mrs. Malaprop has none of the harshness of Mrs. Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer* and we take it unkind of Captain Absolute to call her "a weather-beaten she-dragon." The complacent nod of her head, the smirk on her face, her delightful self-satisfaction and confidence in her "parts of speech" have nothing repulsive in them.....And she is not unkind to Lydia, though the minx deserves it, and has no desire to appropriate her fortune.....Sir Anthony, though so amusing on the stage, is more conventional, since we know he must get angry presently, whenever we meet with him, although his coming round again is equally certain.....

The other characters, though full of brilliant talk, cleverness and folly, have less originality.....while Mrs. Malaprop can hold her ground with Dogberry, Bob Acres is not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with the exquisite reason of that delightful knight, Sir Andrew Aguecheek. And thus it becomes at once apparent that Sheridan's eye for a situation and the details that makes up a striking combination on the



stage, was far more remarkable than his insight into human motives and action. There is no scene on the stage which retains its power of amusing an ordinary audience more brilliantly than that of the proposed duel, where the wittiest of boobies, confesses to feeling his valour ooze out at his finger's ends.....the two men (Bob and Sir Lucius) are little more than symbols of the slightest description, but their dialogue is instinct with wit, and that fun, the most English of qualities, which does not reach the height of humour, yet overwhelms even gravity itself with a laughter in which there is no sting or bitterness. Moliere sometimes attains this effect, but rarely, having too much meaning in him, but with Shakespeare, it is frequent among higher things. And in Sheridan, this gift of innocent ridicule and quick embodiment of the ludicrous without malice or *arriere-pensee* reaches to such heights of excellence as have given his nonsense a sort of immortality.

.....Sheridan's art, from its very beginning was theatrical, if we may use the word, rather than dramatic. It aimed at strong situations and highly effective scenes rather than at a finely constructed story, or the working out of either plot or passion.....the pretty fantastical Lydia, with her romance, her impatience of ordinary life, her hot little spark of temper, was new to the stage, and when she finds a fitting representative can be made delightful upon it ; but there is nothing further to find out about her. The art is charming, the figures full of irony, the touch that sets them before us exquisite..... But there are no depths to be sounded, and no suggestion was to be carried out.....there never was a comedy more dear to the actors, as there never was one more popular on the stage. The even balance of characters, the equality of the parts—scarcely one of them being quite insignificant, and each affording scope enough for a good player to show what is in him,—must make it always popular in the proposition. It is, for the same reason, the delight of amateurs.”

Sir Edmund Gosse—“*The Rivals*.....an amazing feat in comedy for a youngman of twenty-two, not much resembling life indeed but full of whim, and wit and theatrical activity .....A period of only one month separated the first appearance of *The Rivals* from that of *Le Barber de Seville* and it is not unworthy of notice that Sheridan is in a certain sense the Beaumarchain of the English stage. Each of these play-

wrights marked the return of theatrical taste to the Moliere ideals of conventional comedy, after a brief interval of *drame larmoyante*. In Sheridan's case, the direct inspiration came, not so much from Moliere, as from the masters of English Restoration comedy, whose merits he imitated with a happy exclusion of their worst faults.

*Prof. Schelling*—*The Rivals* has been criticised as "a young play" and even the author was accustomed to declare that it was "one of the worst comedies in the language." But it is in the very qualities of sustained buoyancy and high animal-spirits of youth that the enduring charm of the work consists, and it is this especially that has insured its perennial popularity."

*Prof. Saintsbury*—"The *Rivals*, though it can be seen with joy even by persons who do not regard the theatre with extraordinary attention, is even better to read, and not merely because you can then skin Faulkland and Julia if you choose that it is quite free from artificiality, nobody in his senses would maintain. But Sheridan has had the wit to give the artificiality itself that touch of burlsquing sincerer examples of it which saves everything. The piece is a kind of *feerie*; it might not improperly conclude with the transformation of the good old kind, and an immoral harlequinade in which Sir Lucius and Lydia, Sir Anthony and Bob Acres, find their places ready cut out for them, while Mrs. Malaprop would add a new star to the cheerful old constellation of *Commedva dell' arte* comedy of masks. It must be from the lack of imagination, which cannot see the presence at once of fairy-tale and farce, that anybody can find fault with its plot, and fail to discover in it the brilliance of *The School for Scandal*. The fact is that there is nothing else quite like *The Rivals* and the complaints of plagiarism etc. are even more imbecile than usual. You must, indeed, be clever if you can parody without, in a manner, plagiarising. *The Rivals*, as has been said, is like nothing else—at least nothing that came before it. Malapropism may go back through the recent work of Smollett... through Swift to Shakespeare; the testy father is as old even in criticism, as the *Epistle to the Pisos* and heaven knows how much older in drama; the comic Irishman, though he only now comes to be his own, is, though in another sense of almost as ancient a house as he could honestly claim, and Bob Acres's ancestors were born with the comic drama. But in all the immense bulk and range of our theatre, you will find no whole



piece of quite the same kind ; nor will you, if you extend the search to the houses of Moliere or of Calderon. And as Sheridan has here no predecessor in fee so he has no exact successor, despite the immense popularity of the thing, and beyond all doubt, numerous attempts at imitation. His sole heir, and that in a transformed fashion was the late Sir William Gilbert.” (*“The Peace of the Augustans”*)

Allardyce Nicoll—“*The Rivals* presents, not an admixture of Shakespearean humour with features of the “school of manners,” but the very atmosphere of Congreve modified by exaggerated “humours” of the Jonsonian type. The names of the characters are mostly of the humorous sort... Sir Lucius O’ Trigger, Sir Anthony Absolute, and Lydia Languish may be taken as examples ...and the exaggeration of special traits is well-shown in the notorious Mrs. Malaprop. In the main, this comedy presents a direct challenge to the sentimentalists, although in the Julia and Faulkland portions, there are evident features of the Cumberland style. Lydia’s love of a romantic elopement, however, and her fantastic notions of a lover’s duties are clearly modelled as satires on the yet popular style. *The Rivals*, as a whole, is a somewhat disappointing play. Some scenes in it are so excellent that we notice all the more clearly the weaknesses in the whole plan. Sentimental motives clash with elements, taken from the Congreve school, Jonsonian exaggeration-conflicts heavily with the play of wit and fancy. About the whole play too, breathes our atmosphere of force, and although there is something of force in every great comedy, this lower strain tends to weaken the general effect of Sheridan’s work.” (*“British Drama”*)

Allardyce Nicoll—“If Goldsmith marks an attempt to return to Elizabethan comedy, an attempt wherein he stood almost alone, Sheridan shows the movement back to the Restoration masters. Only two dramas, if we except, “*A Trip to Scarborough*” (Drury Lane, Feb, 1777) as a fairly poor effort to make Vanburgh’s “*The Relapse*” fit for the audiences of the time, fall within the purview of this section. Of these, “*The Rivals*” (Covent Garden, Jan. 1775) was Sheridan’s first play, a comedy which, because of some satirical references to the Irish, was greeted with somewhat riotous disapproval on the first and second nights of performance. “*The Rivals*” is a good but by no means, a brilliant comedy. The continuous stream of infelicitious verbiage which flows from the mouth of Mrs. Malaprop, begins after a

time to pall, and the idiosyncrasies of Lydia Languish are over-emphasized. The satire of sentimental self-torture in Faulkland is well-carried out but again, as with Goldsmith, the last scene of the play, introduces a form of sentimentalism which is no longer burlesque, and which clashes rather hopelessly with the rest of the play. Seen on the stage, as read in the study, *The Rivals* is found to be a thing of shreds and patches, and even if those patches were once parts of royal garments, their juxtaposition can hardly be regarded as harmonious. Perhaps literary criticism has made too much of this play too."

("A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama")

Nettleton—"Like Goldsmith, Sheridan could not at once rid himself wholly of the contagion of the sentimentality which he attacked. Consciously or not, he allowed the Faulkland under-plot to retain, in some measure, the conventional phrasing of Sentimental drama. Though Faulkland is a 'humour' character, in whom jealousy is carried to comic exaggeration, some of his and Julia's speeches seem rather an unconscious echo of sentimental diction than raillery at its extravagance. Julia's speech which concludes the play, may serve for a single illustration: "While Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future Bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting—when Hearts deserving Happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers; but ill-judging passion will force the gaudier Rose into wreaths whose thorn offends them—when its Leaves are dropt!" This sentimental strain, no doubt, largely explains favourable comments, even in the midst of general strictures upon the first performance of the play, such as the following: "The character of Faulkland is touched with a delicate and masterly hand, and Faulkland, in most respect, a new, and a very good character...Julia (considered in the line of elegant, and sentimental comedy) is an honour to the drama."

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"Neither occasional traces of sentimental diction nor minor flaws in dramatic structure have seriously endangered the vitality of "The Rivals." The main action is developed through a constant succession of effective stage-situations. The quarrel-scene between Sir Anthony Absolute and his son, the scenes of Mrs. Malaprop and the duel, would, in themselves, command interest, but their effectiveness is enhanced by their position as vital links in the chain of dramatic action. Like Goldsmith, Sheridan prefers expectation to 'surprise' as a dramatic motive.



At the outset, Fag exclaims that Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley 'are one and the same person.' In the postulates of plot, Sheridan seems more natural than Goldsmith. His use of 'mistaken identity' and 'cross-purposes' results in "a comedy of errors" more plausible than Goldsmith's "mistake of a night."

If there are farcical suggestions in *The Rivals*, they arise rather from character than from plot. The very names of the *dramatis personae* suggest their kinship with 'humour comedy.' The accentuation of individual traits of character is, however, not confined to names like Languish, Malaprop, O' Trigger, Absolute, Acres, and Fag. Faulkland's 'humour' is the "reasonable jealousy" as clearly as that of Sir Lucius O' Trigger's "love of fighting." Furthermore, *The Rivals* introduces two highly developed artificial humours in the oath referential or sentimental swearing of Bob Acres and in Mrs. Malaprop's "nice derangement of epithets." Like Dickens, Sheridan often outlines character with broad strokes that suggest caricature. Yet it should be remembered that it is easier to justify exaggeration in the dramatist than in the novelist, and that Shakespeare bestowed upon Mrs. Quickly abnormal perversity in the use of her 'oracular' tongue, whatever aspersions may be cast upon her parts of speech. Mrs. Malaprop remains, among a host of dramatic predecessors and imitators the unrivalled 'queen of dictionary.' Doubtless, Sheridan lacks subtlety in the analysis of character, but he has an exceptional sense of theatrical effectiveness. The courage of Bob Acres dwindles to the actual vanishing-point, when he feels his valour oozing out as it were at the palms of his hands, but the very exaggeration of cowardice, enhances the acting possibilities of the duel-scene. The passion of Sir Anthony Absolute mounts to sheer hyperbole but heightens the dramatic climax of the quarrel-scene with his son. If there are suggestions of farcical exaggeration and unrestraint in Sheridan's delineation of character, he has, at least, extraordinarily effective dramatic art.

In the dialogue, as in character-portrayal, Sheridan has the same brilliant artificiality. He sacrifices naturalness on the altar of wit. Unlike honest Diggory, Fag and David vie with wit with their masters. Pope's question—"Tell me if Congreve's fools are fools indeed?" might be applied to Sheridan. Lucy's cleverness outwits Mrs. Malaprop, and her arch-coquetry captivates Sir Lucius. Even the sentimental excrescences of the under-plot do not long interrupt the brilliant vivacity of

Sheridan's dialogue. "The Rivals" is the initial work of a dramatist of twenty-three. If it fails to hold the mirror up to nature, it has, nevertheless splendid audacity and fertility of dramatic invention and wit. It remains a triumph of artificial comedy."

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"A dramatic artist, not a deep interpreter of life, Sheridan brilliantly touched the surface, without sounding the depths. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in his philosophy. He was, indeed, no dreamer. His eyes sought the immediate foreground, not the far horizon. In the wood outside of Athens, he might have recognised Nick Bottom and his fellows, while Oberon and Titania flitted past unheeded. Sheridan's world, in reality, was Bath and London. Even Lydia Languish, who sought a sentimental elopement to shock society, would have been a sorry exile in the Forest of Arden. Wit rather than humour, brilliancy rather than depth, satire rather than sympathy, art rather than nature are the characteristics of Sheridan's comedies. Unable to follow Shakespeare through the depths of the "comédie humaine," Sheridan wisely chose, under the leadership of the comic dramatists of Restoration, to pursue the easier path of the Comedy of Manners.

Judged merely by the test of continued stage popularity, Sheridan stands today in English drama, second only to Shakespeare. The professional verdict of the modern stage is well-expressed in the words of Sir Henry Irving: "Sheridan brought the Comedy of Manners to the highest perfection, and "The School for Scandal" remains to this day the most popular comedy in the English language. Some of the characters both in this play and in "The Rivals" have become so closely associated with our current speech that we may fairly regard them as imperishable. No farce of our time has so excellent a chance of immortality as "The Critic." The history of the development of English drama since the opening of the theatres in 1660, reaches a significant climax in Sheridan. He is at once the heir to the best traditions of Restoration comedy and the most notable English dramatist of the eighteenth century." ("English Drama of the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century.")

*Robert Herring*: 'The Rivals' is a farce, not a comedy, and is mainly remarkable for the vivid picture it gives of eighteenth century life; though this may be done by types, the types given



at least as much by characterisation as by 'verbal felicities.' Lydia is to the life of the headstrong girl, her head turned by reading and this trait is introduced so subtly, so much as if it were only an excuse for what was then a typical laugh, that we are apt to overlook the deeper significance of her passion for the circulating library. Through her as through Faulkland, Sheridan is having a shrewd hit at two well-known eighteenth century types. Again, Mrs. Malaprop is so famous for her 'nice derangement of epitaphs' that it is seldom noticed how her vulgarity stands out against the courtly refinement of Sir Anthony. Mrs. Malaprop's airs are the result of living in Bath. She is the provincial woman, desperately trying to live up to the smartness of Bath, and be not too far behind London at the same time. In this she is allied to Goldsmith's Mrs. Hardcastle, though it must not be thought that yet another model is being suggested for the original of Lydia's aunt. Sir Anthony himself gives a truly remarkable instance of the breeding that made it possible for his son so to humour the whims of Miss Languish when no one will take Mrs. Malaprop at the end of the play. Whilst making it quite clear that he does not intend to be saddled with her himself, he alone comes to her rescue and tides over the situation with a speech at once charming but definite. "At night," he says, "We single lads will drink a health to the young couples and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop."

The subsidiary lovers have been much criticised and were one of the causes that nearly wrecked the play on its first night. It is true that Faulkland's baseless jealousy becomes wearisome, but Sheridan quite possibly intended them to be tedious and so show up, among their livelier fellows, as the types of lovers prevailing in sentimental comedy. Whether this was so or not, at least it is not hard for us to regard them as such, and, if they are not taken too seriously, and the absurdity of their quarrels should prevent that, they are, in their very foolishness amusing.

The dialogue of this play, though lacking the polished sparkle of "The School for Scandal," is fresh and vigorous and if it does not linger in the love for its own sake, it goes well with the farcical action. It is, however, for the picture of Bath that "The Rivals" presents most interest now. ("Introduction to The Rivals").

*Prof. Ivor Evans*—"Of "The Rivals," which is a miracle as a first

play, Sheridan's own opinion was very modestly expressed, and Moore in his diary goes as far as to affirm that Sheridan always said that "The Rivals" "was one of the worst plays in the language and he would have given anything he had not to have written it." It is a comedy which acts far better than it reads, and this accounts for the patronising tone of the opinion expressed by some contemporary periodicals. A typical example of this critical myopia appears in "The Gentleman's Magazine": "The dialogue of the comedy is, in general, natural and pleasing. As to the plot, though we have often heard of younger brothers and fortune-hunters, assuming fictitious titles and estates as credentials to rich heiresses, it seems very unlikely that real rank and fortune should be deemed an objection therefore disclaimed as in the piece before us. Here the marvellous and the romantic seem to lose sight of the natural and probable." The immediate popularity of the play lay partly in the skill with which Sheridan combined the wit and elegance of a "manners" comedy freed from all immodesty of the Restoration pattern, with scenes of sentimentality which could be played 'straight' or treated ironically. It is more difficult to account for the permanent power which the play has possessed over audiences in the theatre. Sheridan seemed to have some innate knowledge of the conventions of the stage. His characterisation is broad, and indeed in Mrs. Malaprop, it may be urged that it is too broad. Still it consistently gives magnificent opportunities to the players. The plot which would not serve for a novel, holds together admirably, in the theatre. The exposition is quickly, even entertainingly given and the purely comic plot is mingled with the sentimental. The whole has elegances and one is again reminded that while "*morals*" *make men good*, it is "*manners*" that *make them interesting*. One of the most original things in the play is the dialogue. This is Sheridan's own invention. It is sometimes said that Shaw makes all his characters witty or at least amusing, but so do Congreve and Sheridan and Wilde. If the characters talked as they would do in real life, they would be unbearably dull but "a nice derangement of epithets" makes them entertaining and despite the fact that Sheridan is writing in prose, he would seem so have learned from Shakespeare this way of giving a wash of fine words to the play."

(*"A Short History of English Drama"*)

*Thorndike*—Though the emotional refinements of Faulkland and Julia are quite in the Sentimental Drama and equally dull



the remainder of the play is wholly in comic vein with the spirit of Farquhar and wit of Congreve. The main situation is farcical or at least theatrical—a young spark making love under an assumed name to the very girl designed for him by his irascible father—and the accompanying incidents and persons might seem drawn from the repertory of theatre ; but their creator knew Bath and had eloped with a reigning beauty and fought two duels and he had the wit to give the old situations both verisimilitude and vivacity and to inspirit the characters and their juxtapositions with a new comic force. The art of heightening by contrast the comic aspects of character has rarely been exhibited more amazingly than in the conversations of Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres with the others and more exquisitely than in the dialogues between Captain Absolute and his father, Sir Anthony. Bob Acres and Mrs Malaprop are doubtless caricatures, but they are the work of genius. The coward reluctantly engaged in a duel is one of the oft-repeated situations of the stage but nowhere has it been worked out so effectively as here. Every bit of the elaboration counts.....his boorish gaiety that irks the sombre Faulkland, his dressing, his learning to dance—his confidence with his servant, the challenge, and all the complications of the duel. At every moment, his follies shine in contrast to the absurdities of others, especially to the ebullient pugnacity of Sir Lucius. Like Bob Acres, Mrs. Malaprop has a grand stage-part and is always presented in dramatic contrast with other persons, but she would be magnificent even alone and in monologue. How easy it is to invent “malapropism,” once you have been shown how and, yet, of all the specimens produced, are there any such masterpieces of the originator—“He is the very pine-apple of politeness ;” “a nice derangement of epitaphs ;” “was it you that reflected on my parts of speech.”

Is this the picture of life as presented in “The School for Scandal” any more than comic ? Is it real or true or important ? It certainly does not reflect a mind seriously concerned over the problems of society as do the comedies of Etherage and Wycherly. We are not quite sure whether the “manners” of Sheridan’s comedies belong to his own or to an earlier age, whether they are drawn from life or from preceding drama. We can scarcely assert that they present a profound or searching study of the universality of human behaviour. They were the work of a youngman—witty, a great dramatist and a great humourist. His

powers as a humourist are to be found in a wit that is unequalled in readiness and abundance, in the high spirits which will find a laugh anywhere and in view of mankind which discovers plenty that is amusing without probing too deeply. If his representation of life seems sometimes artificial or theatrical, it is well to remember that it is unique. Is there any other picture of English society, so vivid and so entertaining as "The School for Scandal?"

Sheridan had no rivals and few followers. It is absurd to say that his successors revived the Comedy of Manners and killed the sentimental species. It would be nearer the truth to say that he killed the old form. No one could emulate him, and with his plays virtually ends the great tradition that began with Dryden and Etherege but had been sadly lapsing after Farquhar until this later bloom in Murphy, Goldsmith and Sheridan. There were, of course, plays of this type after Sheridan but none of importance. Farces and light comedies still preferred the comic to tearful; living intrigues, low comic scenes and even attempts at wit were to be found in sentimental pieces, but only rarely an attempt was made to write high comedy that was bold, amusing and witty. ('English Comedy')

*Balston*—There are parts, however, of "The Rivals," which are generally considered to be blemishes and to sink below the more uniform excellence of "The School for Scandal. These are the scenes between Julia and Faulkland. I have no doubt that the sentimentality of these characters especially of Faulkland has been greatly exaggerated by contemporaries for praise, and by posterity for blame. Faulkland indeed is a true sentimentalist of the school, generally condemned by Sheridan but in all the scenes in which he appears without Julia and I believe, in those too in which he appears with her, he is treated in a spirit of genuine comedy; his humour rouses much less sympathy than laughter. Julia, however, is never laughable, except in so far as she heightens the ludicrousness of Faulkland, and it seems probable that she was devised as a prop to the Drury Lane audience's passion for sentimentality. Sheridan felt that he could not forbear to laugh at the sentimentalists. The result of the divided aim has been indifferent success. It jars us now to suspect sometimes that Julia and Faulkland are being treated seriously, as it jarred contemporaries to suspect them and laughed at.

Another change which has been brought against Sheridan is



that of plagiarism, and the accusation has been supported by a hundred pieces of evidence. The defence, however, is now as familiar as it is conclusive. A work of art is not, any more than a human-being or a vegetable, a spontaneous growth, unconditioned by the time and place and circumstances of its creation. It is born with a literary ancestry, and it can escape not more easily or completely from its ancestral traditions than a man from the traditions of his family. It no more detracts from Sheridan's genius to point out resemblances to Wycherley or Congreve than it would smirch the reputation of a peer to bear a likeness to the founder of his family. And even if the resemblance is something more than the outcome of tradition, the comparative study of literature has shown that direct borrowing, so far from being impermissible, has given us some of its finest passages. It required but a few touches to transform an extract from a prose translation of Plutarch into the magnificent description of the barge of Cleopatra—as Shakespearean a passage as any in the plays. With regard to Sheridan as to Shakespeare, the only legitimate question is whether he assimilated what he borrowed, and in both cases the answer is unhesitating. The plays of Sheridan are throughout essentially and characteristically the work of Sheridan. Even Mrs. Malaprop, whom he lifted almost bodily from his mother's unpublished play, "A Journey to Bath," has become part and parcel of his work. His real originality lies in the completeness and individuality of his work of art, as in human-beings, is seen in the strength and clearness of the impressions they make on others. If an artist has welded his material into a complete organic whole in which nothing is superfluous or lacking, he has achieved a work of it. ("Introduction to the Rivals")

*Walter Sichel*—The main features of "The Rivals" are those of "She Stoops To Conquer," breeziness and human nature. The play has life—a racy life of boisterous spirits. The brisk and bustling contrasts of character stand in sharp relief while the quick humour of telling situations, fences, thrust on thrust, wit with the wit. It transports us to comedy-land where all goes as it pleases and all comes right in the end. Far less polished and premeditated than "The School for Scandal" breathes the diplomacy of a drawing-room. "The Rivals" is like a game of blind-man's—buff in the open air. And however unnatural this or that phrase may sound in the mouths which repeat it (though on the stage, motive alone can be called "unnatural"), it is not

unreal. The persons move and breathe and have their being. The testy old father is a type ancient as those of Plautus and Terence, but Sir Anthony Absolute, whose tyranny keeps pace with his gout and whose obstinacy contradicts itself, is a distinct species, alive with the lineaments of Sheridan's father. The young scapegrace, again, is no new character, but his impudent air of modesty and his lover's devotion, make him a sort of innocent Charles Surface. If the servants ape their masters and speak of Jupiter, Sheridan could supply his own excuse: "Heaven forbid they should not in a free country," he says in "The Critic." "Sir, I am not for making slavish distinctions and giving all the fine language to the upper sort of people;" and long before Sheridan, Congreve had noticed that the servant's Bob Hall affected smartness and the language above stairs. Bob Acres, however, is wholly original though his fancy in oaths may derive from Congreve, whose Wittol in *The Old Bachelor* exclaims: "Gads, daggers, belts, blades and scabbards"—a rather suspicious coincidence which the plagiary-hunters have missed. We know and see him; there can be no better test than that. So, too, with Lucius whose "Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman?" sums up all his gay bravado.

Even Lydia, the gushing school-girl, is individualised by her passion for elopement. Faulkland and Julia, as we know from the love-letters and love-incidents preceding Sheridan's marriage, are true transcripts from himself and Miss Limley."  
(*"Sheridan, Vol. I"*)

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T E X T  
OF  
SHERIDAN :  
THE RIVALS

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE IN 1775

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE	.	Mr. Shuter
CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE	.	Mr. Woodward.
FAULKLAND	.	Mr. Lewis.
ACRES	.	Mr. Quick.
SIR LUCIUS O' TRIGGER	.	Mr. Lee. <sup>1</sup>
FAG	.	Mr. Lee Lewes.
DAVID	.	Mr. Dunstal.
COACHMAN	.	Mr. Fearon.
MRS. MALAPROP	.	Mrs. Green.
LYDIA LANGUISH	.	Miss Barsanti.
JULIA	.	Mrs. Bulkley.
LUCY	.	Mrs. Lessingham.

*Maid, Boy, Servants, etc.*

*Scene—Bath.*

*Time of Action—Five Hours*

1 Afterwards by Mr. Clinch.





## PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MR. WOODWARD AND MR. QUICK

*Enter SERJEANT AT LAW, and ATTORNEY following,  
and giving a paper*

*Serj.* What's here !—a vile cramp hand ! I cannot see  
Without my spectacles.—*Att.* He means his fee.  
*Nay, Mr. Serjeant good sir, try again.* [*Gives Money.*]

*Serj.* The scrawl improves ! [*More.*] Oh come, it's  
pretty plain.

Hey ! how's this ? Dibble !—sure it cannot be !  
A poet's brief ! a poet and a fee !

*Att.* Yes, sir ! though you without reward, I know,  
Would gladly plead the Muse's cause.—*Serj.*—So !—So

*Att.* And if the fee offends, your wrath should fall  
On me.—*Serj.* Dear Dibble, no offence at all. 10

*Att.* Some sons of Phoebus in the courts we meet,

*Serj.* And fifty sons of Phoebus in the Fleet !

*Att.* Nor pleads he worse, who with a decent sprig  
Of bays adorns his legal waste of wig.

*Serj.* Full-bottomed heroes thus, on signs, unfurl  
A leaf of laurel in a grove of curl !  
Yet tell your client, that, in adverse days,  
This wig is warmer than a bush of bays.

*Att.* Do you, then, sir, my client's place supply, 20  
Profuse of robe, and prodigal of tie—  
Do you, with all those blushing powers of face,  
And wonted bashful hesitating grace,  
Rise in the court, and flourish on the case. [*Exit.*]

*Serj.* For practice then suppose—this brief will show  
it,——

Me, Serjeant Woodward, ——counsel for the poet.  
Used to the ground, I know 'tis hard to deal  
With this dread court, from whence there's no appeal ;  
No *tricking* here, to blunt the edge of law,  
Or, damn'd in equity, escape by flaw :

But *judgment* given, *your sentence* must remain ; 30  
No *writ of error* lies—to *Drury-lane* !

Yet when so kind you seem, 'tis past dispute  
We gain some favour, if not *costs of suit*.  
No spleen is here ! I see no hoarded fury ;  
—I think I never faced a milder jury !  
Sad else our plight ! where frowns are transportation,  
A hiss, the gallows, and a groan, damnation !  
But such the public candour, withour fear  
My client waves all *right of challenge* here.  
No newsman from *our session* is dismiss'd, 40  
Nor wit nor critic we scratch off the list ;  
His faults can never hurt another's ease,  
His crime, at worst, *a bad attempt* to please :  
Thus, all respecting, he appeals to all,  
And by the general voice will *stand* or *fall*.

The play being withdrawn after the first night's representation, upon its second appearance the lines from "Hey ! how's this ?" to "no offence at all," were omitted, and the following inserted :

"How's this ! the poet's brief *again* ! Oh, ho !  
Cast, I suppose ?—*Att.* Oh pardon me—No—No—  
We found the court, o'erlooking stricter laws,  
*Indulgent* to the *merits* of the cause ;  
By *judges* mild unused to harsh denial  
A rule was granted for *another trial*.

*Serj.* Then hark'ee, Dibble, did you *mend* your  
*pleadings* ?  
*Errors*, no few, we've found in our *proceedings*.

*Att.* Come, courage, sir, we did *amend* our *plea*,  
Hence your *new brief*, and this *refreshing fee*."



## PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN ON THE TENTH NIGHT BY MRS. BULKLEY

GRANTED our cause, our suit and trial o'er,  
The worthy Serjeant need appear no more :  
In pleasing I a different client choose,  
He served the Poet,—I would serve the Muse :  
Like him, I'll try to merit your applause,  
A female counsel in a female's cause.

Look on this form,<sup>1</sup>—where Humour, quaint and sly,  
Dimples the cheek, and points the beaming eye ;  
Where gay Invention seems to boast its wiles  
In amorous hint, and half-triumphant smiles ;  
While her light mask or covers Satire's strokes,  
Or hides the conscious blush her wit provokes.  
—Look on her well—does she seem form'd to teach ?  
Should you *expect* to hear this lady preach ?  
Is gray experience suited to her youth ?  
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth ?  
Bid her be grave, those lips should rebel prove  
To every theme that slanders mirth or love.

10

Yet thus adorn'd with every graceful art  
To charm the fancy and yet reach the heart—  
Must we displace her ? And instead advance  
The Goddess of the woful countenance—  
The sentimental Muse !—Her emblems view,  
The Pilgrim's Progress, and a spring of rue !  
View her—too chaste to look like flesh and blood—  
Primly portrayed on emblematic wood !  
There fix'd in usurpation should she stand,  
She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand :  
And having made her vot'ries *weep a flood*,  
Good heaven ! she'll end her comedies in blood—  
Bid Harry Woodward break poor Dunstal's crown !  
Imprison Quick, and knock Ned Shuter down ;

20

30

<sup>1</sup> Pointing to the figure of Comedy.

While sad Barsanti, weeping o'er the scene,  
Shall stab herself—or poison Mrs. Green—

Such dire encroachments to prevent in time,  
Demands the critic's voice—the poet's rhyme.  
Can our light scenes add strength to holy laws !  
Such puny patronage but hurts the cause :  
Fair Virtue scorns our feeble aid to ask ;  
And moral Truth disdains the trickster's mask.  
For here there fav'rite stands,<sup>1</sup> whose brow, severe  
And sad, claims Youth's respect, and Pity's tear ;  
Who, when oppress'd by foes her worth creates,  
Can point a poniard at the Guilt she hates.

1 Pointing to Tragedy.

*Tragedy*

*Tragedy*

*Tragedy*

*Tragedy*

*Tragedy*

*Tragedy*  
*Tragedy*

## ACT I

### SCENE I—A Street in Bath

COACHMAN *crosses the stage.*—Enter FAG, looking after him.

Fag. What ! Thomas !—Sure 'tis he ?—What ! Thomas ! Thomas !

Coach. Hey !—Odds life ! Mr. Fag !—give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas :—I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad : why, my prince of charioteers, you look as hearty !—but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath ?

Coach. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come. 10

Fag. Indeed !

Coach. Ay ! master thought another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit ;—so he'd a mind to gi't the slip, and whip ! we were all off at an hour's warning.

Fag. Ay, ay ! hasty in everything, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute !

Coach. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master ? Odd ! Sir Anthony will stare to the captain here !

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.—

Coach. Why, sure ! 20

Fag. At present I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Coach. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Coach. No ! why, didn't you say you had left young master ?

Fag. No.—Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no further :—briefly then—Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person, 30

Coach. The devil they are !

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas ; and the *ensign* half of my master being on guard at present—the *captain* has nothing to do with me.

Coach. So, so !—what this is some freak, I warrant !—Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't—yon know I ha' trusted you.



*Fag.* You'll be secret, Thomas.

*Coach.* As a coach-horse.

*Fag.* Why then, the cause of all this is—LOVE,—Love Thomas, who (as you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter. 41

*Coach.* Ay, ay ;—I guess'd there was a lady in the case :—but pray, why does your master pass only for ensign ? now if he had shamm'd general indeed !—

*Fag.* Ah ! Thomas, there lies the mystery o' the matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste : a lady who likes him better as a half-pay ensign than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a year. 50

*Coach.* That is an odd taste indeed !—but has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag ? is she rich, hey ?

*Fag.* Rich !—why, I believe she owns half the stocks ! Zounds ! Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman !—She has a lap-dog that eats out of gold,—she feeds her parrot with small pearls,—and all her thread-papers are made of banknotes !

*Coach.* Bravo, faith !—Odd ! I warrant she has a set of thousands at least :—but does she draw kindly with the captain ? 60

*Fag.* As fond as pigeons.

*Coach.* May one hear her name ?

*Fag.* Miss Lydia Languish.—But there is an old tough aunt in the way ;—though, by the bye, she has never seen my master—for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

*Coach.* Well—I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony.—But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath ?—I ha' heard a deal of it—here's a mort o' merry-making, hey ? 70

*Fag.* Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well—'tis a good lounge ; in the morning we go to the pump-room (though neither my master nor I drink the waters) ; after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards ; at night we dance ; but damn the place, I'm tired of it : their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle nor a card after eleven !—however, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties ;—I'll introduce you there, Thomas—you'll like him much.

*Coach.* Sure, I know Mr. Du-Peigne—you know his master is to marry Madam Julia. *of the coach*

*Fag.* I had forgot.—But, Thomas, you must polish a little—indeed you must—Here now—this wig!—what the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas?—none of the London whips of any degree of *ton* wear wigs now. *mean that this is 81*

*Coach.* More's the pity! more's the pity, I say—Od's life! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 'twould go next:—Od rabbit it! when the fashion had got foot on the Bar, I guess'd 'twould mount to the Box!—but 'tis all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag: and look'ee, I'll never gi' up mine—the lawyers and doctors may do as they will. *Coachman* 93

*Fag.* Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that.

*Coach.* Why, bless you, the gentlemen of the professions ben't all of a mind—for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge the exciseman has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick the farrier swears he'll never forsake his bob, tho' all the college should appear with their own heads! *happen* 100

*Fag.* Indeed! well said, Dick! but hold—mark! mark! Thomas.

*Coach.* Zooks! 'tis the captain—Is that the lady with him?

*Fag.* No! no! that is *Madam* Lucy—my master's mistress's maid. They lodge at that house—but I must after him to tell him the news. *new*

*Coach.* Od! he's giving her money!—well, Mr. Fag—

*Fag.* Good-bye, Thomas. I have an appointment in Gyde's Porch this evening at eight; meet me there, and we'll make a little party. *you* [Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II—A Dressing-room in MRS. MALAPROP'S lodgings

LYDIA sitting on sofa, with a book in her hand

LUCY, as just returned from a message

*Lucy.* Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it: I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at. *went through*

*Lydia.* And could not you get "The Reward of Constancy?" *Book*

*Lucy.* No, indeed, ma'am.

*Lydia.* Nor "The Fatal Connexion?"

*Lucy.* No, indeed, ma'am.

*Lydia.* Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart?"

*Lucy.* Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

*Lydia.* Heigh-ho!—Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress?"

*Lucy.*—Or "The Memoirs of Lady Woodford?" Yes, indeed, ma'am. I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-ear'd it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

*Lydia.* Heigh-ho!—Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb; and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes.—Well, child, what have you brought me?

*Lucy.* Oh! here, ma'am.

[Taking books from under her cloak,  
and from her pockets.]

This is "The Gordian Knot,"—and this "Peregrine Pickle." Here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker." This is "The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality," written by herself, and here the second volume of "The Sentimental Journey." 30

*Lydia.* Heigh-ho!—What are those books by the glass?

*Lucy.* The great one is only "The Whole Duty of Man," where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

*Lydia.* Very well—give me the sal volatile.

*Lucy.* Is it in a blue cover ma'am?

*Lydia.* My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

*Lucy.* O, the drops!—here, ma'am.

*Lydia.* Hold!—here's some one coming—quick, see who it is—

[Exit LUCY.]

Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice!

41

[Re-enter LUCY.]

*Lucy.* Lud! ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

*Lydia.* Is it possible!—

Enter JULIA

*Lydia.* My dearest Julia, now delighted am I! (*Embrace.*) How unexpected was this happiness!

*Julia.* True, Lydia—and our pleasure is the greater;—but



what has been the matter?—you were denied to me at first!

*Lydia.* Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you!—but first inform me what has conjured you to Bath?—Is Sir Anthony here?

*Julia.* He is—we are arrived within this hour—and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dress'd.

*Lydia.* Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress!—I know your gentle nature will sympathise with me, though your prudence may condemn me!—My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley;—but I have lost him, Julia!—my aunt has discovered our intercourse by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since!—Yet, would you believe it? she has fallen absolutely in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here at Lady Macshusffle's rout.

*Julia.* You jest, Lydia?

*Lydia.* No, upon my word.—She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him:—but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

*Julia.* Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her niece.

*Lydia.* Quite the contrary. Since she has discovered her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague!—That odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that I protest I shall be teased out of all spirits!

*Julia.* Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

*Lydia.* But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since, to make it up.

*Julia.* What was his offence?

*Lydia.* Nothing at all!—But, I don't know how it was as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel!—And, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity.—So, last Thursday, I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was at that time paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it "your friend unknown," showed

it to Beverley charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more. 92

*Julia.* And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

*Lydia.* 'Twas the next day my aunt found the matter out. I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I've lost him for ever.

*Julia.* If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign, and you have thirty thousand pounds! 101

*Lydia.* But you know I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do, ever since I knew the penalty. Nor could I love the man who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

*Julia.* Nay, this is caprice!

*Lydia.* What, does Julia tax me with caprice?—I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

*Julia.* I do not love even his faults. 110

*Lydia.* But apropos—you have sent to him, I suppose?

*Julia.* Not yet, upon my word—nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

*Lydia.* Well Julia, you are your own mistress (though under the protection of Sir Anthony), yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover.

*Julia.* Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point.—And for his character, you wrong him there too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble to be jealous; if he is captious, 'tis without dissembling; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover—but being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move

*to love him*  
*whole hearted*  
 in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough:—This temper, I must own, has cost me many unhappy hours; but I have learned to think myself his debtor for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment. *admit* 141

*and*  
*rough what upset*  
*happy*  
 Lydia. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are?—Believe me, the rude blast that overset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

*and*  
 Julia. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient. *strong favour* 150

*and*  
 Lydia. Obligation!—Why, a water-spaniel would have done as much!—Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim! *my fail*

*save you*  
 Julia. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

*and*  
 Lydia. Nay, I do but jest.—What's here?

*Jack*  
*Enter LUCY in a hurry*

*and*  
 Lucy. Oh, ma'am, here is Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt, *do keep watch*

Lydia. They'll not come here—Lucy, do you watch. [Exit LUCY. 164

*and*  
 Julia. Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town, I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously misapplied, without being mispronounced. *clearly misapplied*

*and*  
*Re-enter LUCY*

Lucy. O lud! ma'am, they are both coming upstairs.

*and*  
 Lydia. Well, I'll not detain you, coz.—Adieu, my dear Julia, I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland.—There—through my room you'll find another staircase. *easy as well*

Julia. Adieu!—(Embrace.) [Exit JULIA.

Lydia. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, *tell her to hide them*



quick.—Fling “Peregrine Pickle” under the toilet—throw “Roderick Random” into the closet—put “The Innocent Adultery” into “The Whole Duty of Man”—thrust “Lord Aimworth” under the sofa—cram “Ovid” behind the bolster—there—put “The Man of Feeling” into your pocket—so, see—now lay “Mrs. Chapone” in sight and leave “Fordyce’s Sermons” open on the table.

Lucy. O, burn it, ma’am, the hair-dresser has torn away as far as ‘Proper Pride.’

Lydia. Never mind—open at ‘Sobriety.’—Fling me “Lord Chesterfield’s Letters.”—Now for’em. 181

Enter MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton, who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lydia. I thought you once—

Mrs. Mal. you thought miss! I don’t know any business you have to think at all—thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to illiterate him, I say, quite from your money. 190

Lydia. Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not easy to forget.

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to forget, if a person chooses to set about it, I’m sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle, as if he had never existed—and I thought it my duty so to do, and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don’t become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why, sure, she won’t pretend to remember what she’s order’d not!—ay, this comes of her reading!

Lydia. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. Mal. Now don’t attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it.—But tell me, will you promise to do as you’re bid? Will you take a husband of your friend’s choosing?

Lydia. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, miss, with preference

and *aversion*? They don't become a young woman: and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a blackamoor—and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made!—and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed!—But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

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*Lydia.* Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

*Mrs. Mal.* Take yourself to your room.—You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

*Lydia.* Willingly, ma'am—I cannot change for the worse.

[Exit LYDIA,

*Mrs. Mal.* There's a little intricate hussy for you!

*Sir Anth.* It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!

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*Mrs. Mal.* Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

*Sir Anth.* In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—she had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

*Mrs. Mal.* Those are vile places, indeed!

*Sir Anth.* Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!—And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

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*Mrs. Mal.* Fie, fie, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

*Sir Anth.* Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

*Mrs. Mal.* Observe me, Sir Anthony.—I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance,



I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments:—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in dorder to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in Geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

*Sir Anth.* Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate,—you say, you have no objection to my proposal.

*Mrs. Mal.* None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

*Sir Anth.* Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

*Mrs. Mal.* We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

*Sir Anth.* Objection!—let him object if he dare!—No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in their younger days, 'twas "Jack, do this";—if he demurred, I knocked him down—and if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

*Mrs. Mal.* Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience!—nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity.—Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations;—and I hope you will represent her to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.



*Sir Anth.* Madam, I will handle the subject prudently.—well, I must leave you ; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl ;—take my advice—keep a tight hand : if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key ; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about. *[Exit Sir ANTH.]*

*Mrs. Mal.* Well, at any rate I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition. She has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O' Trigger—sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me !—No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it.—Lucy !—Lucy !—*(Calls)*. Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

*Enter LUCY*

*Lucy.* Did you call, ma'am ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Yes, girl.—Did you see Sir Lucius while you

*was out ?*

*Lucy.* No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

*Mrs. Mal.* You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned—

*Lucy.* O Gemini ! I'd sooner cut my tongue out.

*Mrs. Mal.* Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

*Lucy.* No, ma'am.

*Mrs. Mal.* So, come to me presently ; and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius ; but mind, Lucy—if ever you betray what you are entrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence for ever ; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality. *[Exit Mrs. MAL.]*

*Lucy.* Ha ! ha ! ha !—So, my dear simplicity, let me give you a little respite.—*(altering her manner)*—let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trusts ; commend me to a mask of silliness, and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it !—Let me see to what account have I turned my simplicity lately *(looks at a paper)*. For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign !—in money, sundry times, twelve pound twelve : gowns, five ; hats, ruffles, caps, etc., etc. numberless !—From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half.—About a quarter's pay !—Item, from Mrs. Malaprop, for betraying the young people to her—when I found matters were likely

to be discovered—two guineas, and a black padusoy.—Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters—which I never delivered—two guineas, and a pair of buckles.—Item, from Sir Lucius O' Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box.—Well done, simplicity!—yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe, that he was corresponding, not with the aunt, but with the niece: for though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortunes. [Exit.

Gentleman

old man



telling  
same  
lie



tell  
to  
say

## ACT II

### SCENE I—Captain ABSOLUTE's Lodgings

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and FAG

*Fag.* Sir, while I was there, Sir Anthony came in : I told him, you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

*Abs.* And what did he say on hearing I was at Bath?

*Fag.* Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished! He started back two or three paces, rapt out a dozen interjectoral oaths, and asked, what the devil had brought you here?

*Abs.* Well, sir, and what did you say?

*Fag.* Oh, I lied, sir—I forgot the precise lie; but you may depend on't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what has brought us to Bath, in order that we may lie a little consistently.—Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

*Abs.* You have said nothing to them—?

*Fag.* O, not a word, sir,—not a word. Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips)—

*Abs.* 'Sdeath!—you rascal! you have not trusted him!

*Fag.* O, no, sir—no—no—not a syllable, upon my veracity!—He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I was sly, sir—devilish sly! My master (said I), honest Thomas (you know, sir, one says honest to one's inferiors), is come to Bath to recruit—Yes, sir, I said to recruit—and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else. 27

*Abs.* Well, recruit will do—let it be so.

*Fag.* O, sir, recruit will do surprisingly—indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers. 32

*Abs.* You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

*Fag.* I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon—But, with submission,



sion, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.

*Abs.* Well, take care you don't hurt your credit by offering too much security.—Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

*Fag.* He is above, sir, changing his dress. 40

*Abs.* Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

*Fag.* I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol—I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down—

*Abs.* Go, tell him, I am here.

*Fag.* Yes, sir—(going.)—I beg your pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember, that we are recruiting, if you please.

*Abs.* Well, well.

*Fag.* And in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I should esteem it as an obligation; for though I never scruple a lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out. [Exit.

*Abs.* Now for my whimsical friend—if he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him—

*Enter FAULKLAND*

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return, 60

*Faulk.* Yes; I had nothing to detain me, when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? How stand matters between you and Lydia?

*Abs.* Faith, much as they were; I have not seen her since our quarrel; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

*Faulk.* Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once?

*Abs.* What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune? You forget that, my friend.—No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago. 71

*Faulk.* Nay then, you trifle too long—if you are sure of her, propose to the aunt in your own character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

*Abs.* Softly; softly; for though I am convinced my little

Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side ; no, no ; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it,—well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the Hotel ?

*Faulk.* Indeed I cannot ; I am not in spirits to be of such a party. 84

*Abs.* By Heavens ! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover !—Do love like a man.

*Faulk.* Low I am unfit for company.

*Abs.* Am not I a lover ?—ay, and a romantic one too ? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain ? 92

*Faulk.* Ah ! Jack, your heart and soul are not, like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but losing, you could stake, and throw again : but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed, were to be stripped of all.

*Abs.* But, for Heaven's sake ! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present ? 100

*Faulk.* What grounds for apprehension, did you say ? Heavens ! are there not a thousand ! I fear for her spirits—her health—her life.—My absence may fret her ; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper. And for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed ? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame ! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her ! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her, for whom only I value mine. O, Jack ! when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension ! 114

*Abs.* Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not.—So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well and in spirits, you would be entirely content.

*Faulk.* I should be happy beyond measure—I am anxious only for that. 120

*Abs.* Then to cure your anxiety at once—Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

*Faulk.* Nay, Jack—don't trifle with me.

*Abs.* She is arrived here with my father within this hour.

*Faulk.* Can you be serious?

*Abs.* I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised as a sudden whim of this kind.—Seriously then, it is as I tell you—upon my honour.

*Faulk.* My dear friend!—Hollo, Du-Peigne! my hat—my dear Jack—now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness. 132

*Enter FAG*

*Fag.* Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

*Abs.* Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her. Fag, show the gentleman up. [Exit FAG.]

*Faulk.* What, is he much acquainted in the family?

*Abs.* O, very intimate: I insist on your not going: besides, his character will divert you. 140

*Faulk.* Well, I should like to ask him a few questions.

*Abs.* He is likewise a rival of mine—that is, of my other self's, for he does not think his friend Captain Absolute ever saw the lady in question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of one Beverley, a concealed skulking rival, who—

*Faulk.* Hush!—He's here.

*Enter ACRES*

*Acres.* Hah! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou? just arrived, faith, as you see.—Sir, your humble servant.—Warm work on the roads, Jack—Od's whips and wheels! I've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall. 153

*Abs.* Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither—Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

*Acres.* Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you: Sir, I solicit your connexions.—Hey, Jack—what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who— 160



*Abs.* Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

*Acres.* Odso! she and your father can be but just arrived before me—I suppose you have seen them. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

*Faulk.* I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir;—I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire?

*Acres.* Never knew her better in my life, sir,—never better. Od's blushes and blooms! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

*Faulk.* Indeed!—I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

*Acres.* False, false, sir—only said to vex you: quite the reverse, I assure you.

*Faulk.* There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

*Abs.* Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick.

*Faulk.* No, no, you misunderstand me:—yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love.—Now confess—isn't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

*Abs.* O, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

*Acres.* Good apartments, Jack.

*Faulk.* Well, sir, but you was saying that Miss Melville has been so exceedingly well—what then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—Always in spirits—hey?

*Acres.* Merry, od's crickets! she has been the bell and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining! so full of wit and humour.

*Faulk.* There Jack, there.—O, by my soul! there is an innate levity in woman that nothing can overcome.—What! happy, and I away!

*Abs.* Have done:—How foolish this is? Just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's spirits.

*Faulk.* Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

*Abs.* No indeed, you have not.

*Faulk.* Have I been lively and entertaining?

*Abs.* O, upon my word, I acquit you.

*Faulk.* Have I been full of wit and humour?

*Abs.* No, faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

*Acres.* What's the matter with the gentleman?

*Abs.* He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that's all—hey, Faulkland?

*Faulk.* Oh! I am rejoiced to hear it—yes, yes, she has a happy disposition!

*Acres.* That she has indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante!—there was this time month—Od's minnums and crotchets!—how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

*Faulk.* There again, what say you to this? you see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me!

*Abs.* Pho! man, is not music the food of love?

*Faulk.* Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr.—, what's his damn'd name!—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

*Acres.* Not I indeed.

*Abs.* Stay now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant; perhaps you may recollect;—did she sing, “When absent from my soul's delight?”

*Acres.* No, that wa'n't it.

*Abs.* Or, “Go, gentle gales!”—“Go, gentle gales!”—  
(Sings).

*Acres.* O, no! nothing like it.——Od's! now I recollect one of them—“My heart's my own, my will is free.”—(Sings). 233

*Faulk.* Fool, fool that I am! to fix all my happiness on such a trifle! 'Sdeath! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! to soothe her light heart with catches and glees!—What can you say to this, sir?

*Abs.* Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, sir.

*Faulk.* Nay, nay, nay,—I'm not sorry that she has been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I would not have had her sad or sick—yet surely a sympathetic heart would have shown itself even in the choice of a song—she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay;—but she has been dancing too, I doubt not!

*Acres.* What does the gentleman say about dancing?



*Abs.* He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

*Acres.* Ay truly, does she—there was at our last race ball—

*Faulk.* Hell and the devil! There! there—I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she thrives in my absence!—Dancing! but her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine;—I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary—my days have been hours of care, my nights of watchfulness.—She has been all health! spirit! laugh! song! dance!—Oh! damn'd, damn'd levity!

*Abs.* For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so.—Suppose she has danced, what then?—does not the ceremony of society often oblige—

*Faulk.* Well, well, I'll contain myself—perhaps as you say—for form sake.—What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a minuet—hey?

*Acres.* O, I dare insure her for that—but what I was going to speak of was her country-dancing:—Od's swimmings! she has such an air with her!

*Faulk.* Now disappointment on her! defend this, Absolute; why don't you defend this?—Country-dances! jigs and reels! am I to blame now? A minuet I could have forgiven—I should not have minded that—I say I should not have regarded a minuet—but country-dances!—Zounds! had she made one in a cotillion—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies! to show paces like a managed filly!—O Jack, there never can be but one man in the world, whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a country-dance; and even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

*Abs.* Ay, to be sure!—grandfathers and grandmothers!

*Faulk.* If there be but one vicious mind in the set 'twill spread like a contagion.—The action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried and that confounded looby has perceived it.

*Going.*  
a dance performed by a or 8 steps



*Abs.* Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news. 292

*Faulk.* Damn his news ! [Exit FAULKLAND.

*Abs.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! poor Faulkland five minutes since—"nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness" !

*Acres.* The gentleman wa'n't angry at my praising his mistress, was he ?

*Abs.* A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

*Acres.* You don't say so ? Ha ! ha ! jealous of me—that's a good joke. 301

*Abs.* There's nothing strange in that, Bob ; Bob ; let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

*Acres.* Ah ! you joke—ha ! ha ! mischief—ha ! ha ! but you know I am not my own property, my dear Lydia has forestalled me.—She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly—but Od's frogs and tambours ! I sha'n't take matters so here—now ancient madam has no voice in it—I'll make my old clothes know who's master—I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock—and render my leather breeches incapable—My hair has been in training some time. 313

*Abs.* Indeed !

*Acres.* Ay—and thoff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

*Abs.* O, you'll polish, I doubt not.

*Acres.* ~~Absolutely~~ I propose so—then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, Od's triggers and flints ! I'll make him know the difference o't. 320

*Abs.* Spoke like a man—but pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing—

*Acres.* Ha ! ha ! you've taken notice of it—'tis genteel, isn't ?—I didn't invent it myself though ; but a commander in our militia—a great scholar, I assure you—says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable ;—because he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Love ! or by Bacchus ! or by Mars ! or by Venus ! or by Pallas ! according to the sentiment—so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the "oath should be an echo to the sensc" ; and this we call the oath referential, or sentimental swearing—ha ! ha ! ha ! 'tis genteel, isn't it ? 334

*place*  
*Abs.* Very genteel, and very new indeed—and, I dare say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

*Acres.* Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete—Damns have had their day.

*Enter FAG*

*Fag.* Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you—  
 Shall I show him into the parlour?—*sitting room*

*Abs.* Ay—you may.

*Acres.* Well, I must be gone—

*Abs.* Stay; who is it, Fag?

*Fag.* Your father, sir.

*Abs.* You puppy, why didn't you show him up directly.

[Exit FAG.]

*Acres.* You have business with Sir Anthony.—I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop at my lodgings—I have sent also to my dear friend Sir Lucius O' Trigger. Adieu, Jack, we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia.

*Abs.* That I will with all my heart.

[Exit ACRES.]

Now for a parental lecture—I hope he has heard nothing of the business that has brought me here—I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

*Enter SIR ANTHONY*

Sir, I am delighted to see you here; and looking so well! Your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

*Sir Anth.* Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack.—What, you are recruiting here, hey?

*Abs.* Yes, sir, I am on duty.

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*Sir Anth.* Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it, for I was going to write to you on a little matter of business.—Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

*Abs.* Pardon me, sir I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

*Sir Anth.* I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well, then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty, I may continue to plague you a long time.—Now Jack, I am sensible that the income of your com-

mission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit. *make you completely free* 374

*ent* Abs. Sir, you are very good.

Sir Anth. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence. *Such kindness*

*the* Abs. Sir, your kindness overpowers me—such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection. *thank for*

*or* Sir Anth. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks. *pleased*

*of* Abs. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence. Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army? *large*

*ent* Sir Anth. O, that shall be as your wife chooses. *new tidings*

Abs. My wife, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay, ay, settle that between you—settle that between you. 390

Abs. A wife, sir, did you say?

Sir Anth. Ay, a wife—why, did not I mention her before?

Abs. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir Anth. Odso!—I mustn't forget *her* though.—Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by a marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference. *thank a whole lot*

Abs. Sir! Sir!—you amaze me!

Sir Anth. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty. 401

Abs. I was, sir,—you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir Anth. Why—what difference does that make? Od's life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands. *that's all*

Abs. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase.—Pray, sir, who is the lady? 409

Sir Anth. What's that to you, sir?—Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly. *must be ready*

Abs. Sure, sir. this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!



*Sir Anth.* I am sure, sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to a lady you know nothing of.

*Abs.* Then, sir, I must tell you plainly that my inclinations are fixed on another—my heart is engaged to an angel.

*Sir Anth.* Then pray let it send an excuse.—It is very sorry—but *business* prevents its waiting on her. 420

*Abs.* But my vows are pledged to her.

*Sir Anth.* Let her foreclose, Jack ; let her foreclose ; they are not worth redeeming ; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose ; so there can be no loss there.

*Abs.* You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

*Sir Anth.* Hark'ee Jack ; —I have heard you for some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool ; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted ;—no one more easily led—when I have my own way ;—but don't put me in a frenzy. 432

*Abs.* Sir, I must repeat it—In this I cannot obey you.

*Sir Anth.* Now damn me ! if ever I call you Jack again while I live !

*Abs.* Nay, sir, but hear me.

*Sir Anth.* Sir, I won't hear a word—not a word ! not one word ! so give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't, by— 440

*Abs.* What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness ! to—

*Sir Anth.* Zounds ! sirrah ! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose : she shall have a hump on each shoulder ; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent ; her eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum ; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah !—yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

*Abs.* This is reason and moderation indeed !

*Sir Anth.* None of your sneering, puppy ! no grinning, jackanapes ! 450

*Abs.* Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

*Sir Anth.* 'Tis false, sir, I know you are laughing in your sleeve ; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah !

*Abs.* Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

*Sir Anth.* None of your passion, sir! none of your violence; if you please—It won't do with me, I promise you. angry 461

*Abs.* Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

*Sir Anth.* 'Tis a confounded lie—I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog! but it won't do. angry

*Abs.* Nay, sir, upon my word.

*Sir Anth.* So you will fly out! can't you be cool like me? What the devil can *passion* do?—*Passion* is of no service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing reprobate!—There you sneer again!—don't provoke me!—but you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my disposition! Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last!—but mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you! I may in time forgive you—If not, zounds! don't enter the same hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me: but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own! I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest.—I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! and damn me! if ever I call you Jack again! 484

[Exit SIR ANTHONY.]

ABSOLUTE *solus*

*Abs.* Mild, gentle, considerate father—I kiss your hands.—What a tender method of giving his opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the truth.—I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that he wants to bestow on me!—yet he married himself for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer and a gay companion!

Enter FAG

*Fag.* Assuredly, sir, your father is wrath to a degree; he comes down-stairs eight or ten steps at a time—muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way: I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door—rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all, for a puppy triumvirate!—Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place,

and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance. 501

*Station* *ip* *anger words* *alone* *alone*  
*Abs.* Cease your impertinence, sir, at present.—Did you come for nothing more?—Stand out of the way!

[Pushes him aside, and exit.

*FAG solus*

*Fag.* Soh ! Sir Anthony trims my master : he is afraid to reply to his father—then vents his spleen on poor Fag !—When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice ! Ah ! it shows the worst temper—the basest—

*nearest* Enter ERRAND BOY

*Boy.* Mr. Fag ! Mr. Fag ! your master calls you.

*Fag.* Well ! you little dirty puppy, you need not bawl so !—The meanest disposition ! the—

*Boy.* Quick, quick, Mr. Fag *hide monkey*

*Fag.* Quick ! quick ! you impudent jackanapes ! am I to be commanded by you too ? you little, impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred—

[Exit kicking and beating him.

## SCENE II—The North Parade

Enter LUCY

*Lucy.* So—I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list—Captain Absolute. However, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed !—Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him.—Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his dear *Dalia*, as he calls her. I wonder he's not here !—I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit ; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that *Delia* was near fifty, and her own mistress. 11

Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

*Sir Luc.* Hah ! my little *ambadress*—upon my conscience, I have been looking for you ; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

*Lucy.* (Speaking simply.) O Gemini ! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.



*truly answering*  
*I am sure enjoying sleep*  
*passed by*  
 Sir Luc. Faith!—may be, that was the reason we did not meet; and it is very comical too, how you could go out and I not see you—for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-house, and I chose the window on purpose that I might not miss you.

Lucy. My stars! Now I'd wager sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir Luc. Sure enough it must have been so—and I never dreamed it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have—I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir Luc. O faith! I guessed you weren't come empty-handed—well—let me see what the dear creature says.

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. (*Gives him a letter.*)

Sir Luc. (*reads.*) 'Sir—there is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger.'—Very pretty, upon my word.—'Female punctuation forbids me to say more; yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections. DELIA.'

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language. Faith, she's quite the queen of the dictionary!—for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call—though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience.

Sir Luc. Experience? what, at seventeen?

Lucy. O true, sir—but then she reads so—my stars! how she will read off hand!

Sir Luc. Faith, she must be very deep read to write this way—though she is rather an arbitrary writer too—for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

Lucy. Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

Sir Luc. O tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain!—But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent—and do everything fairly.

*Lucy.* Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice ! 61

*Sir Luc.* Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it :—I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action.—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl (*gives her money*), here's a little something to buy you a riband ; and meet me in the evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand to put you in mind. (*Kisses her.*)

*Lucy.* O Lud ! Sir Lucius—I never seed such a gemman ! My lady won't like you if you're so impudent. 71

*Sir Luc.* Faith she will, Lucy—that same—pho ! what's the name of it ?—*Modesty* !—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked ; so if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty—my dear.

*Lucy.* What, would you have me tell her a lie ?

*Sir Luc.* Ah, then, you *baggage* ! I'll make it a truth presently.

*Lucy.* For shame now ; here is some one coming. 80

*Sir Luc.* O faith, I'll quiet your conscience !

[*Sees FAG.—Exit, humming a tune.*]

*Enter FAG*

*Fag.* So, so, ma'am. I humbly beg pardon,

*Lucy.* O Lud ! now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so.

*Fag.* Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please.—You play false with us, madam.—I saw you give the baronet a letter.—My master shall know this—and if he don't call him out, I will.

*Lucy.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty.—That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton.—She is taken with Sir Lucius's address. 91

*Fag.* How ! what tastes some people have !—Why, I suppose I have walked by her window an hundred times.—But what says our young lady ? Any message to my master ?

*Lucy.* Sad news ! Mr. Fag.—A worse rival than Acres ! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son,

*Fag.* What, Captain Absolute ?

*Lucy.* Even so—I overheard it all.

*Fag.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! very good, faith. Good-bye. Lucy, I must away with this news. 101

*Lucy.* Well, you may laugh—but it is true, I assure you. (Going.) But—Mr. Fag—tell your master not to be cast down by this.

*Fag.* O, he'll be so disconsolate !

*Lucy.* And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

*Fag.* Never fear !—never fear !

*Lucy.* Be sure—bid him keep up his spirits.

*Fag.* We will—we will.

[ *Exeunt severally.* ]

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## ACT III

### SCENE I—The North Parade

Enter ABSOLUTE

*Abs.* 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed.—Whimsical enough, faith! My father wants to *force* me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with!—He must not know of my connection with her yet awhile.—He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters.—However, I'll read my recantation instantly.—My conversion is something sudden, indeed—but I can assure him it is very *sincere*.—So, so,—here he comes.—He looks plaguy gruff *annoyingly or roughly* Steps aside.

Enter SIR ANTHONY

*Sir Anth.* No—I'll die sooner than forgive him.—*Die*, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him.—At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper.—An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy!—Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters!—for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since!—But I have done with him,—he's anybody's son for me.—I never will see him more, never—never—never—never.

*Abs.* (Coming forward). Now for a penitential face.

*Sir Anth.* Fellow, get out of my way.

*Abs.* Sir, you see a penitent before you.

*Sir Anth.* I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

*Abs.* A sincere penitent. I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

*Sir Anth.* What's that?

*Abs.* I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

*Sir Anth.* Well, sir?

*Abs.* I have been likewise weighing and balancing what

you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience and authority.

*Sir Anth.* Well, puppy ?

*Abs.* Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is—a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

*Sir Anth.* Why now you talk sense—absolute sense——I never heard anything more sensible in my life. ~~★~~ Confound you !  
you shall be Jack again. 41

*Abs.* I am happy in the appellation.

*Sir Anth.* Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is —Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare. Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare.—What think you of Miss Lydia Languish ?

*Abs.* Languish ? What, the Languishes of Worcestershire ?

*Sir Anth.* Worcestershire ! No. Did you ever meet Mrs. Malaprop and her neice, Miss Languish who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment ? 53

*Abs.* Malaprop ! Languish ! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yes, stay—I think I do recollect something.—Languish ! Languish ! She squints, don't she ?—A little red-haired girl !

*Sir Anth.* Squints !—A red-haired girl—Zounds ! no.

*Abs.* Then I must have forgot ; it can't be the same person.

*Sir Anth.* Jack ! Jack ! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen ?

*Abs.* As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent.—If I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

*Sir Anth.* Nay, but, Jack, such eyes ! such eyes so innocently wild ! so bashfully irresolute ! Not a glance but speak and kindles some thought of love !—Then, Jack, her cheeks, Jack ! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes !—Then, Jack, her lips ! O Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion ; and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting, more lovely in sullenness !

*Abs.* That's she indeed.—Well done, old gentleman !

[ *aside.*

*Sir Anth.* Then, Jack, her neck !—O Jack ! Jack !

*Abs.* And which is to be mine, sir, the niece or the aunt?

*Sir Anth.* Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you. When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The *aunt*, indeed!—Od's life! when I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

83

*Abs.* Not to please your father, sir?

*Sir Anth.* To please my father!—Zounds! not to please—Oh, my father—Odso!—yes—yes: if my father indeed had desired—that's quite another matter.—Though he wa'nt the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

*Abs.* I dare say not, sir.

*Sir Anth.* But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

*Abs.* Sir, I repeat it—if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind—now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back: and though *one* eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of *two*, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article. 101

*Sir Anth.* What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite! a vile, insensible stock.—You a soldier!—you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on!—Od's life! I've a great mind to marry the girl myself!

*Abs.* I am entirely at your disposal, sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the *aunt*; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady—'tis the same to me—I'll marry the *niece*. 111

*Sir Anth.* Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or—but, come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must—come, now—damn your demure face!—come, confess, Jack—you have been lying—ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite, hey?—I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

*Abs.* I'm sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken. 120



*Sir Anth.* Hang your respect and duty ! But come along with me, I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you,—come along, I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, egad, I'll marry the girl myself ! [Exeunt.]

SCENE II—JULIA'S *Dressing-room*

FAULKLAND *solus*

*Faulk.* They told me Julia would return directly ; I wonder she is not yet come !—How mean does this captious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment ! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point :—but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious !—I am conscious of it—yet I cannot correct myself ! What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met !—How delicate was the warmth of her expressions !—I was ashamed to appear less happy—though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations ;—Yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so *very* happy in my absence.—She is coming !—Yes !—I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

17

*Enter JULIA*

*Julia.* I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

*Faulk.* Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome—restrained as we were by the presence of a third person ? 21

*Julia.* O Faulkland, when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

*Faulk.* 'Twas but your fancy, Julia—I was rejoiced to see you—to see you in such health—Sure I had no cause for coldness ?

*Julia.* Nay then. I see you have taken something ill.—You must not conceal from me what it is.

*Faulk.* Well, then—shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire—on your mirth—your

singing—dancing, and I know not what!—For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy.—The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers is a compact that no smile shall live there till they meet again.

*Julia.* Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing minute caprice?—Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh in your breast against my tried affection?

*Faulk.* They have no weight with me, Julia: No, no—I am happy if you have been so—yet only say that you did not sing with *mirth*—say that you *thought* of Faulkland in the dance. 46

*Julia.* I never can be happy in your absence.—If I wear a countenance for content, it is to show that my mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth.—If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph; and say, that I had fixed my heart on one, who left me to lament his roving and my own credulity.—Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you, when I say, that I have often dressed sorrow in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears. 55

*Faulk.* You were ever all goodness to me.—O, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

*Julia.* If ever, without such cause from you, as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude.

*Faulk.* Ah! Julia that last word is grating to me. I would I had no title to your *gratitude*! Search your heart, Julia; perhaps what you have mistaken for love, is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart!

*Julia.* For what quality must I love you?

*Faulk.* For no quality! To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding, were only to *esteem* me. And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation *there* for any part of your affection.

*Julia.* Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who in *this* vain article, perhaps might rank above you; but my heart has never asked my eyes if it were so or not.

*Faulk.* Now this is not well from you, Julia,—I despise

person in a man—yet, if you loved me as I wish, though I were an Æthiop, you'd think none so fair.

*Julia.* I see you are determined to be unkind—The *contract* which my poor father bound us in gives you more than a lover's privilege. 82

*Faulk.* Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts.—I would not have been more free—no—I am proud of my restraint.—Yet—yet—perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else has made a worthier choice.—How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love? 90

*Julia.* Then try me now.—Let us be free as strangers as to what is past :—*my* heart will not feel more liberty !

*Faulk.* There now ! so hasty, Julia ! so anxious to be free !—If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not loose your hold, even though I wished it !

*Julia.* O ! you torture me to the heart ! I cannot bear it.

*Faulk.* I do not mean to distress you—If I loved you less, I should never give you an uneasy moment.—But hear me.—All my fretful doubts arise from this.—Women are not used to weigh and separate the motives of their affections : the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty, may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart.—I would not boast—yet let me say, that I have neither age, person, nor character, to found dislike on ;—my fortune such as few ladies could be charged with indiscretion in the match.—O, Julia ! when *Love* receives such countenance from *Prudence*, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth. 109

*Julia.* I know not whither your insinuations would tend :—But as they seem pressing to insult me, I will spare you the regret of having done so.—I have given you no cause for this !

[ *Exit in tears.*

*Faulk.* In tears ! Stay, Julia : stay but for a moment.—The door is fastened !—Julia !—my soul—but for one moment : I hear her sobbing !—'Sdeath ! what a brute am I to use her thus ! Yet stay.—Ay—she is coming now :—how little resolution there is in woman !—how a few soft words can turn them !—No, faith !—she is *not* coming either.—Why, Julia—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is



being *too* resentful.—Stay ! she is coming to—I thought she would—no *steadiness* in anything ! her going away must have been a mere trick then—she shan't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference—(*hums a tune: then listens*)—No—Zounds ! she's *not* coming !—nor don't indeed it, I suppose.—This is not *steadiness* but *obstinacy* ! Yet I deserve it.—What, after so long as absence to quarrel with her tenderness !—'twas barbarous and unmanly ! I should be ashamed to see her now.—I'll wait till her just resentment is abated—and when I distress her so again, may I lose her for ever ! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions and long hoarded spleen shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III—MRS. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*

MRS. MALAPROP, with a letter in her hand, and

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE

*Mrs. Mal.* Your being Sir Anthony's son, captain, would itself be sufficient accomodation ; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

*Abs.* Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop ; of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent.

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir, you do me infinite honour !—I beg, captain, you'll be seated.—(*They sit.*)—Ah ! few gentlemen, nowadays, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman ! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman !—Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty !

*Abs.* It is but too true, indeed, ma'am ;—yet I fear our ladies should share the blame—they think our admiration of *beauty* so great, that *knowledge* in *them* would be superfluous. Thus, like garden-trees, they seldom show fruit, till time has robbed them of the more specious blossom.—Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once !

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir, you overpower me with good-breeding.—He is the very pine-apple of politeness ! You are not ignorant, captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her

affections on a beggarly, strolling, eavesdropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

*Abs.* O, I have heard the silly affair before.—I'm not at all prejudiced against her on *that* account. 31

*Mrs. Mal.* You are very good and very considerate, captain.—I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair ; long ago I laid my positive conjunctions on her never to think on the fellow again ;—I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her ; but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

*Abs.* It must be very distressing indeed, ma'am.

*Mrs. Mal.* Oh ! it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree ;—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him ; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow ; I believe I have it in my pocket. 44

*Abs.* O, the devil ! my last note. [ *aside.*

*Mrs. Mal.* Ay, here it is.

*Abs.* Ay, my note indeed ! O, the little traitress Lucy ! [ *aside.*

*Mrs. Mal.* There, perhaps you may know the writing. [ *Gives him the letter.*

*Abs.* I think I have seen the hand before—yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before— 51

*Mrs. Mal.* Nay, but read it, captain.

*Abs.* (*Reads.*) "*My soul's idol, my adored Lydia !*"—Very tender indeed.

*Mrs. Mal.* Tender ! ay, and profane too, o' my conscience.

*Abs.* (*Reads.*) "*I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival—*"

*Mrs. Mal.* That's you, sir.

*Abs.* (*Reads.*) "*Has universally the character of being an accomplished getleman, and a man of houour.*"—Well, that's handsome enough.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, the fellow has some design in writing so.

*Abs.* That he had, I'll answer for him, ma'am.

*Mrs. Mal.* But go on, sir,—you'll see presently.

*Abs.* (*Reads.*) "*As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you*"—Who can he mean by that ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Me, sir !—*me* !—he means *me* there—what do you think now ?—but go on a little farther.

*Abs.* Impudent scoundrel ! (*Reads.*) “*it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity, which makes her dress up her coarse features, and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don’t understand*”—

*Mrs. Mal.* There, sir, an attack upon my language ! what do you think of *that* ?—an aspersion upon my parts of speech ! was ever such a brute ! Sure if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs !

*Abs.* He deserves to be hanged and quartered ! let me see—  
(*Reads.*) “*same ridiculous vanity*—” 81

*Mrs. Mal.* You need not read it again, sir.

*Abs.* I beg pardon, ma’am—(*Reads.*) “*does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration*”—an impudent coxcomb !—“*so that I have a scheme to see you shortly with the old harridan’s consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interview.*”—Was ever such assurance !

*Mrs. Mal.* Did you ever hear anything like it ?—he’ll elude my vigilance, will he—yes, yes ! ha ! ha ! he’s very likely to enter these doors !—we’ll try who can plot best ?

*Abs.* So we will, ma’am—so we will.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! a conceited puppy, ha ! ha ! ha !—Well, but, Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time—let her even plot an elopement with him—then do you connive at her escape—while I, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

*Mrs. Mal.* I am delighted with the scheme ; never was  
anything better perpetrated ! 101

*Abs.* But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now ?—I should like to try her temper a little.

*Mrs. Mal.* Why, I don’t know—I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind.—There is a decorum in these matters.

*Abs.* O, Lord ! she won’t mind *me*—only tell her Beverley—

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir !

*Abs.* Gently, good tongue.

[ *aside.*



*Mrs. Mal.* What did you say of Beverley ? 111

*Abs.* O, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below—she'd come down fast enough then—ha ! ha ! ha !

*Mrs. Mal.* 'Twould be a trick she well deserves.—besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her—ha ! ha !—Let him if he can, I say again.—(*Calling*)—Lydia, come down here !—He'll make me a *go-between* in their interviews !—ha ! ha ! ha !—Come down, I say, Lydia ! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha ! ha ! ha ! his impudence is truly ridiculous. 121

*Abs.* 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am, ha ! ha ! ha !

*Mrs. Mal.* The little hussy won't hear.—Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her.—And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

*Abs.* As you please, ma'am.

*Mrs. Mal.* For the present, captain, your servant—Ah ! you've not done laughing yet, I see—*elude my vigilance !* yes, yes ; ha ! ha ! ha ! [*Exit.*

*Abs.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security—but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her.—I'll see whether she knows me. 136

[*Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.*

*Enter LYDIA*

*Lydia.* What a scene am I now to go through ! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart—I have heard of girls persecuted as I am, who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival : suppose I were to try it—there stands the hated rival—an officer too !—but O, how unlike my Beverley !—I wonder he don't begin—truly he seems a very negligent wooer !—quite at his ease, upon my word !—I'll speak first—Mr. Absolute.

*Abs.* Ma'am.

[*turns round.*

*Lydia.* Oh, heavens ! Beverley !

*Abs.* Hush !—hush, my life ! softly ! be not surprised.

*Lydia.* I am so astonished ! and so terrified ! and so overjoyed !—for heaven's sake ! how came you here ? 151

*Abs.* Briefly, I have deceived your aunt—I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and contrived to have him kept away, have passed myself on *her* for Captain Absolute.

*Lydia.* O, charming !—And she really takes you for young Absolute ?

*Abs.* O, she's convinced of it.

*Lydia.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! I can't forbear laughing to think how her sagacity is over-reached ! 160

*Abs.* But we trifle with our precious moments—such another opportunity may not occur—then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserving persecution, and with a licenced warmth plead for my reward.

*Lydia.* Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth ?—that burden on the wings of love ?

*Abs.* O, come to me—rich only thus—in loveliness—Bring no portion to me but thy love—twill be generous in you, Lydia—for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

*Lydia.* How persuasive are his words !—how charming will poverty be with him !

*Abs.* Ah ! my soul, what a life will we then live ! Love shall be our idol and support ! we will worship him with a monastic strictness; abjuring all worldly toys, to centre every thought and action there.—Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright.—By Heaven ! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here—  
[Embracing her.

If she holds out now. the devil is in it ! [aside.

*Lydia.* Now could I fly with him to the antipodes ! but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis. [Aside.

*Enter MRS. MALAPROP, listening*

*Mrs. Mal.* I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [aside.

*Abs.* So pensive, Lydia !—is then your warmth abated ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Warmth abated !—so !—she has been in a passion, I suppose. [ *aside.* 193

*Lydia.* No—nor ever can while I have life.

*Mrs. Mal.* An ill-tempered little devil !—She'll be in a passion all her life—will she ? [ *aside.*

*Lydia.* Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

*Mrs. Mal.* Very dutiful, upon my word ! [ *aside.*

*Lydia.* Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

*Mrs. Mal.* I am astonished at her assurance !—to his face—this is to his face ! [ *aside.*

*Abs.* Thus then let me enforce my suit. [ *Kneeling.*

*Mrs. Mal.* Ay, poor young man !—down on his knees entreating for pity !—I can contain no longer.—[ *Coming forward.* Why, thou vixen !—I have overheard you.

*Abs.* O, confound her vigilance ! [ *aside.*

*Mrs. Mal.* Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologise for her shocking rudeness. 210

*Abs.* So—all's safe, I find. [ *aside.*  
I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady— [ *aloud.*

*Mrs. Mal.* O, there's nothing to be hoped for from her ! she's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.

*Lydia.* Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you tell this gentleman to his face that you loved another better ?—didn't you say you never would be his ? 229

*Lydia.* No, madam—I did not.

*Mrs. Mal.* Good heavens ! what assurance !—Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman !—Didn't you boast that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart ?—Tell me that, I say.

*Lydia.* 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley—

*Mrs. Mal.* Hold ! hold, Assurance !—you shall not be so rude.

*Abs.* Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young



lady's speech :—she's very welcome to talk thus—it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you. 232

*Mrs. Mal.* You are *too* good, captain—*too* amiably patient—but come with me, miss.—Let us see you again soon, captain—remember what we have fixed.

*Abs.* I shall, ma'am.

*Mrs. Mal.* Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

*Lydia.* May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev—

*Mrs. Mal.* Hussy ! I'll choke the word in your throat—  
come along—come along. [Exeunt severally.]

[ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA—  
*Mrs. MALAPROP* stopping her speaking.]

#### SCENE IV—ACRES' Lodgings

ACRES and DAVID—ACRES as just dressed

*Acres.* Indeed, David—do you think I become it so ?

*David.* You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass ! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkey in all the printshops in Bath.

*Acres.* Dress *does* make a difference, David.

*David.* 'Tis all in all, I think.—difference ! why, an' you were to go now to clod Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you ; Master Butler wouldn't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, "Lard preserve me !" our dairy-maid would come giggling to the door ; and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat—Oons ! I'll hold a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail ! 14

*Acres.* Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

*David.* So I says of your honour's boots ; but the boy never heeds me !

*Acres.* But, David, has Mr. De-la-grace been here ? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing and boring. 20

*David.* I'll call again, sir.

*Acres.* Do—and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.

*David.* I will.—By the mass, I can't help looking at your head !—if I hadn't been by at the cooking, I wish I may die if

I should have known the dish again myself. [Exit.

[ACRES comes forward, practising a dancing step.

*Acres.* Sink, slide—coupee—Confound the first inventors of cotillions ! say I—they are as bad as algebra to us country gentlemen—I can walk a minuet easy enough when I am forced !—and I have been accounted a good stick in a country dance.—Od's jigs and tabors ! I never valued your cross-over to couple—figure in—right and left—and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the country !—but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillions are quite beyond me !—I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure—mine are true-born English legs—they don't understand their cursed French lingo ! their *pas* this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other ! damn me ! my feet don't like to be called paws ! no, 'tis certain I have most Anti-Gullican toes !

*Enter SERVANT*

*Serv.* Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.

*Acres.* Show him in. [Exit servant.

*Enter Sir LUCIUS*

*Sir Luc.* Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace you.

*Acres.* My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

*Sir Luc.* Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath ?

*Acres.* Faith ! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last.—In short, I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius—I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as on a very ill-used gentleman.

*Sir Luc.* Pray, what is the case ?—I ask no names. 50

*Acres.* Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival : and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of—This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-used.

*Sir Luc.* Very ill, upon my conscience.—Pray, can you divine the cause of it ?

*Acres.* Why, there's the matter : she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Od's slanders and lies ! he must be at the bottom of it. 60

*Sir Luc.* A rival in the case, is there ?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly ?

*Acres.* Unfairly ! to be sure he has.—He never could have done it fairly.

*Sir Luc.* Then sure you know what is to be done !

*Acres.* Not I, upon my soul !

*Sir Luc.* We wear no swords here, but you understand me.

*Acres.* What ! fight him !

*Sir Luc.* Ay, to be sure : what can I mean else ? 70

*Acres.* But he has given me no provocation.

*Sir Luc.* Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world.—Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman ? O, by my soul ! it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

*Acres.* Breach of friendship ! Ay, ay ; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

*Sir Luc.* That's no argument at all—he has the less right then to take such a liberty. 80

*Acres.* Gad, that's true.—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius ! —I fire apace ! Od's hilts and blades ! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it ! But couldn't I contrive to have a little right on my side ?

*Sir Luc.* What the devil signifies *right* when your *honour* is concerned ? Do you think Achilles, or my little Alexander the Great, ever inquired where the right lay ? No, by my soul, they drew their broadswords and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

*Acres.* Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart ! I believe courage must be catching !—I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say—Od's flints, pans, and triggers ! I'll challenge him directly.

*Sir Luc.* Ah, my little friend ! if I had *Blunderbuss Hall* here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O' Trigger line, that would furnish the new room ; every one of whom had killed his man !—For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipped through my fingers, I thank heaven our honour and the family pictures are as fresh as ever 102

*Acres.* O, Sir Lucius ! I have had ancestors too !—every man of 'em colonel or captain in the militia !—Od's balls and barrels ! say no more—I'm braced for it.—The thunder of



your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast—Zounds ! as the man in the play says, “I could do such deeds—”

*Sir Luc.* Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case—these things should always be done civilly.

*Acres.* I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius—I must be in a rage.—Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me.—Come, here’s pen and paper—(*Sits down to write.*)—I would the ink were red !—Indite, I say indite !—How shall I begin ? Od’s bullets and blades ! I’ll write a good bold hand, however. 116

*Sir Luc.* Pray compose yourself.

*Acres.* Come—now, shall I begin with an oath ? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

*Sir Luc.* Pho ! pho ! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now—“*Sir,*”— 121

*Acres.* That’s too civil by half.

*Sir Luc.* “*To prevent the confusion that might arise—*”

*Acres.* Well—

*Sir Luc.* “*From our both addressing the same lady—*”

*Acres.* Ay—there’s the reason—“*same lady*”—Well—

*Sir Luc.* “*I shall expect the honour of your company—*”

*Acres.* Zounds ! I’m not asking him to dinner.

*Sir Luc.* Pray be easy.

*Acres.* Well then, ‘honour of your company,’—

*Sir Luc.* “*To settle our pretensions—*” 132

*Acres.* Well.

*Sir Luc.* Let me see, ay, King’s Mead Fields will do—“*in King’s Mead Fields.*”

*Acres.* So that’s done.—Well, I’ll fold it up presently ; my own crest—a hand and dagger shall be the seal.

*Sir Luc.* You see now this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

*Acres.* Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

*Sir Luc.* Now, I’ll leave you to fix your own time.—Take my advice and you’ll decide it this evening if you can ; then let the worst come of it, ’twill be off your mind to-morrow.

*Acres.*—Very true.

*Sir Luc.* So I shall see nothing more of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening.—I would do myself the honour to carry your message ; but, to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately, at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman to call him out. 153

*Acres.* By my valour, I should like to see you fight first ! Od's life ! I should like to see you kill him, if it was only to get a little lesson.

*Sir Luc.* I shall be very proud of instructing you.—Well for the present—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable manner.—Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished as your sword. [Exeunt severally.]

## ACT IV

### SCENE I—ACRES' Lodgings

ACRES and DAVID

DAVID. Then, by the mass, sir ! I would do no such thing—ne'er a St. Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wa'n't so minded. Oons ! What will the old lady say, when she hears o't ?

Acres. Ah ! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius !——Od's sparks and flames ! he would have roused your valour.

David. Not he, indeed. I hates such bloodthirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you'd wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off ; but for your cursed sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em. 12

Acres. But my honour, David, my honour ! I must be careful of my honour.

David. Ay, by the mass ! and I would be very careful of it ; and I think in return my *honour* couldn't do less than to be very careful of *me*.

Acres. Od's blades ! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour !

David. I say then, it would be but civil in *honour* never to risk the loss of a *gentleman*.—Look'ee, master, this *honour* seems to me to be a marvellous false friend : ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant.—Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank God, no one can say of me) ; well—my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance.—So—we fight. (Pleasant enough that.) Boh !—I kill him—(the more's my luck) ! Now, pray who gets the profit of it ?—Why, my *honour*. But put the case that he kills me !—by mass ! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No David—in that case !—Od's crowns and laurels ! your honour follows you to the grave. S2

David. Now, that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Zounds ! David, you are a coward !—It doesn't be-



come my valour to listen to you.—What, shall I disgrace my ancestors ?—Think of that, David—think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors !

*David.* Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee now, master, to go to them in such haste—with an ounce of lead in your brains—I should think might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks ; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with. 45

*Acres.* But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very, very great danger, hey ? Od's life ! people often fight without any mischief done !

*David.* By the mass, I think 'tis ten to one against you ! —Oons ! here to meet some lion-hearted fellow, I warrant, with his damn'd double-barralled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols !—Lord bless us ! it makes me tremble to think o't—Those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons ! Well, I never could abide 'em !—from a child I never could fancy 'em !—I suppose there a'n't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol !

*Acres.* Zounds ! I *won't* be afraid—Od's fire and fury ! you shan't make me afraid.—Here is the challenge, and I have sent for my dear friend Jack Absolute to carry it for me. 61

*David.* Ay, i' the name of mischief, let *him* be the messenger.—For my part, I wouldn't lend a hand to it for the best horse in your stable. By the mass ! it don't look like another letter !—It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter ;—and I warrant smells of gunpowder like a soldier's pouch !—Oons ! I would'nt swear it mayn't go off !

*Acres.* Out, you poltroon !—you han't the value of a grass-hopper. 70

*David.* Well, I say no more—'twill be sad news, to be sure, at Clod Hall ! but I ha' done.—How Phillis will howl when she hears about it !—Ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after !—And I waraant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years will curse the hour he was born. [Whimpering.

*Acres.* It won't do, David—I am determined to fight—so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

*Enter SERVANT*

*Serv.* Captain Absolute, sir.

*Acres.* Oh ! show him up.

[*Exit SERVANT.*

*David.* Well, heaven send we be all alive this time to-mor-  
row. 82

*Acres.* What's that !—Don't provoke me, David !

*David.* Good-bye, master.

[*Whimpering.*

*Acres.* Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven.  
[*Exit DAVID.*

*Enter ABSOLUTE*

*Abs.* What's the matter, Bob ?

*Acres.* A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead ! If I hadn't the  
valour of St. George and the dragon to boot—

*Abs.* But what did you want with me, Bob ? 90

*Acres.* O !—There— [Gives him the challenge.

*Abs.* "To Ensign Beverley." So—what's going on now !  
[*aside.*

(*Aloud*) Well, what's this ?

*Acres.* A challenge !

*Abs.* Indeed !—Why, you won't fight him ; will you, Bob ?

*Acres.* Egad, but I will, Jack.—Sir Lucius has wrought me  
to it. He has left me full of rage—and I'll fight this evening,  
that so much good passion mayn't be wasted.

*Abs.* But what have I to do with this ? 101

*Acres.* Why, as I think you know something of the fellow,  
I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal  
defiance.

*Abs.* Well, give it to me, and trust me he gets it.

*Acres.* Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack ; but it is  
giving you a great deal of trouble.

*Abs.* Not in the least—I beg you won't mention it.—No  
trouble in the world, I assure you.

*Acres.* You are very kind.—What it is to have a friend !—  
You couldn't be my second—could you, Jack ?

*Abs.* Why, no, Bob—not in *this* affair—it would not be  
quite so proper. 113

*Acres.* Well, then, I must get my friend Sir Lucius. I shall  
have your good wishes, however, Jack ?

*Abs.* Whenever he meets you, believe me.

*Enter SERVANT*

*Serv.* Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

*Abs.* I'll come instantly.—(*Exit SERVANT*) Well, my little hero, success attend you. [*Going.*

*Acres.* Stay—stay, Jack—If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow—will you, Jack ? 123

*Abs.* To be sure I shall.—I'll say you are a determined dog—hey, Bob ?

*Acres.* Ay, do, do—and if that frightens him, egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week ; will you, Jack ?

*Abs.* I will, I will ; I'll say you are called in the country “*Fighting Bob.*” 130

*Acres.* Right—right—'tis all to prevent mischief ; for I don't want to take his life if I clear my honour.

*Abs.* No !—that's very kind of you.

*Acres.* Why, you don't wish me to kill him—do you, Jack ?

*Abs.* No, upon my soul, I do not.—But a devil of fellow, hey ? [*Going.*

*Acres.* True, true—but stay—stay, Jack—you may add that you never saw me in such a rage before—a most devouring rage !

*Abs.* I will, I will.

*Acres.* Remember, Jack—a determined dog !

*Abs.* Ay, Ay, “*Fighting Bob !*” [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II—MRS. MALAPROP's Lodgings

MRS. MALAPROP and LYDIA

*Mrs. Mal.* Why, thou perverse one !—tell me what you can object to him ?—Isn't he a handsome man ?—tell me that.—A genteel man ? a pretty figure of a man ?

*Lydia.* She little thinks whom she is praising ! [*Aside*  
So is Beverley, ma'am. [*Aloud.*

*Mrs. Mal.* No caparisons, miss, if you please.—Caparisons don't become a young woman.—No ! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman !



*Lydia.* Ay, the Captain Absolute *you* have seen. [*aside.* 9

*Mrs. Mal.* Then he's *so* well-bred ;—*so* full of alacrity and adulation !—and has *so much* to say for himself :—in such good language, too !—His physiognomy *so* grammatical !—Then his presence is *so* noble !—I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play :—“Hesperian curls—the front of *Job* himself !—An eye, like *March*, to threaten at command !—A station, like *Harry Mercury*, new—” Something about kissing—on a hill—however, the similitude struck me directly.

*Lydia.* How enraged she'll be presently, when she discovers her mistake ! [*aside.*

*Enter SERVANT*

*Serv.* Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am. 22

*Mrs. Mal.* Show them up here. [*Exit SERVANT.*  
Now, *Lydia*, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman.—Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

*Lydia.* Madam, I have told you my resolution !—I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to, or look at him.

[*Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door.*

*Enter SIR ANTHONY and ABSOLUTE*

*Sir Anth.* Here we are, *Mrs. Malaprop* ; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty,—and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow.—I don't know what's the matter ; but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip. 34

*Mrs. Mal.* You have infinite trouble, *Sir Anthony*, in the affair.—I am ashamed for the cause !—*Lydia*, *Lydia*, rise, I beseech you !—pay your respects ! [*aside to her.*

*Sir Anth.* I hope, madam, that *Miss Languish* has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice, and *my* alliance.—Now, *Jack*, speak to her. [*aside to him.*

*Abs.* (*Aside.*) What the devil shall I do ! (*Aloud.*) You see, sir, she won't even look at me whilst you are here.—I knew she wouldn't !—I told you so—Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together ! 45

[*ABSOLUTE seems to expostulate with his father.*

*Lydia. (Aside.)* I wonder I ha'n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him!—perhaps the regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

*Sir Anth.* I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet. 455 50

*Mrs. Mal.* I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small.—Turn round, Lydia; I blush for you! [aside to her.]

*Sir Anth.* May I not flatter myself, that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son!—Why don't you begin, Jack?—Speak, you puppy—speak! [aside to him.]

*Mrs. Mal.* It is impossible, Sir Anthony. she can have any.—She will not say she has.—Answer, hussy! why don't you answer? [aside to her.]

*Sir Anth.* Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness.—Zounds! sirrah! why don't you speak? [aside to him.]

*Lydia. (Aside.)* I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself.—How strangely blind my aunt must be! 66

*Abs.* Hem! hem! madam—hem! (ABSOLUTE attempts to speak, then returns to Sir ANTHONY)—Faith! sir, I am so confounded!—and—so—so—confused!—I told you I should be so, sir,—I knew it.—The—the—tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

*Sir Anth.* But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it?—Go up, and speak to her directly! 73

[ABSOLUTE makes signs to Mrs. MALAPROP to leave them together.]

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together?—Ah! you stubborn little vixen! [Aside to her.]

*Sir Anth.* Not yet, ma'am, not yet!—What the devil are you at? unlock your jaws, sirrah, or— [Aside to him.]

[ABSOLUTE draws near LYDIA]

*Abs.* Now heaven send she may be too sullen to look round!—I must disguise my voice. [aside.]

—Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love? Will not— [Speaks in a low hoarse tone.]

*Sir Anth.* What the devil ails the fellow ?—Why don't you speak out ?—not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy !

*Abs.* The—the—excess of my awe, and my—my—my modesty, quite choke me !

*Sir Anth.* Ah ! your *modesty* again ! I'll tell you what, Jack, if you don't speak out directly, and glibly too, I shall be in such a rage !—Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

[Mrs. MALAPROP seems to chide LYDIA.

*Abs.* (*Aside.*) So all will out, I see ! 91

[Goes up to LYDIA, speaks softly.

Be not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all surprise at present.

*Lydia.* (*Aside.*) Heavens ! 'tis Beverley's voice !—Sure he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony too !

[Looks round by degrees, then starts up.

Is this possible !—my Beverley !—how can this be ?—my Beverley ?

*Abs.* Ah ! 'tis all over. [*aside.*

*Sir Anth.* Beverley !—the devil—Beverley !—What can the girl mean ?—This is my son, Jack Absolute. 100

*Mrs. Mal.* For shame, hussy ! for shame !—your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes !—beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

*Lydia.* I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley !

*Sir Anth.* Zounds ! the girl's mad !—her brain's turned by reading !

*Mrs. Mal.* O' my conscience, I believe so !—What do you mean by Beverley, hussy ?—You saw Captain Absolute before to-day ; there he is—your husband that shall be. 112

*Lydia.* With all my soul, ma'am—when I refuse my Beverley—

*Sir Anth.* O ! she's as mad as Bedlam !—or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick ?—Come here, sirrah, who the devil are you ?

*Abs.* Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself ; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

*Sir Anth.* Are you my son or not ?—answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me. 121

*Mrs. Mal.* Ay, sir, who are you ? O, mercy ! I begin to suspect !—



*Abs.* Ye powers of Impudence, befriend me ! (*Aside.*)—Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son ; and that I sincerely believe myself to be *yours* also, I hope my duty has always shown.—Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer—and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew.—I need not tell my Lydia that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name and station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character. 133

*Lydia.* So !—there will be no elopement after all ! [*Sullenly.*

*Sir Anth.* Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow ! To do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance !

*Abs.* O, you flatter me, sir,—you compliment—'tis my modesty, you know, sir—my modesty that has stood in my way. 140

*Sir Anth.* Well, I am glad you are not the dull, insensible varlet you pretended to be, however !—I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog—I am—So this was your penitence, your duty, and obedience !—I thought it was damn'd sudden !—You never heard their names before, not you !—What, the LANGUISHES of Worcestershire, hey ?—if you could please me in the affair, 'twas all you desired !—Ah ! you dissembling villain !—What !—(*Pointing to LYDIA*) she squints, don't she ?—a little red-haired girl !—hey ?—Why, you hypocritical young rascal !—I wonder you a'n't ashamed to hold up your head ! 152

*Abs.* 'Tis with difficulty, sir.—I am confused—very much confused, as you must perceive.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, Lud ! Sir Anthony !—a new light breaks in upon me !—hey !—how ! what ! captain, did you write the letters then ?—What—am I to thank you for the elegant compilation of “an old weather-beaten she-dragon”—hey ?—O, mercy !—was it you that reflected on my parts of speech ? 160

*Abs.* Dear sir ! my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me.—I shall certainly not be able to stand it !

*Sir Anth.* Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive ;—od's life ! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured ! and so gallant ! hey ! Mrs. Malaprop !

*Mrs. Mal.* Well, Sir Anthony, since *you* desire it, we will not anticipate the past ;—so mind, young people—our retrospection will be all to the future. 170

*Sir Anth.* Come, we must leave them together ; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant !—Jack—*isn't* the cheek as I said, hey ?—and the eye, you rogue !—and the lip—hey ? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness !—“Youth's the season made for joy,”—(*sings*)—hey !—Od's life ! I'm in such spirits,—I don't know what I could not do !—Permit me, ma'am—(*gives his hand to MRS. MALAPROP*)—(*sings*) Tol-de-rol—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—Tol-de rol ! de rol ! 181

[*Exit singing and handing Mrs. MALAPROP.*

[*LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair.*

*Abs.* So much thought bodes me no good. (*Aloud,*)—So grave, Lydia !

*Lydia.* Sir !

*Abs.* (*aside.*) So !—egad ! I thought as much !—that damn'd mono-syllable has froze me !—(*Aloud.*)—What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent, as in our mutual vows—

*Lydia.* Friends' consent indeed ! [*Peevishly.*

*Abs.* Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little *wealth* and *comfort* may be endured after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as— 193

*Lydia.* Lawyers ! I hate lawyers !

*Abs.* Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the licence, and—

*Lydia.* The licence !—I hate licence !

*Abs.* O, my love ! be not so unkind !—thus let me entreat— [*Kneeling.*

*Lydia.* Pshaw !—what signifies kneeling when you know I *must* have you ? 201

*Abs.* (*Rising.*) Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have lost your heart—I resign the rest.—'Gad, I must try what a little *spirit* will do. [*aside.*

*Lydia.* (*Rising.*) Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud.—What, you have been treat-

ing *me* like a child !—humouring my romance ! and laughing, I suppose, at your success !

*Abs.* You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me—only hear—214

*Lydia.* So, while *I* fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all—behold, my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation—and *I* am myself the only dupe at last ! (*Walking about in a heat.*)—But here, sir, here is the picture—Beverley's picture ! (*taking a miniature from her bosom*) which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties !—There, sir (*flings it to him*), and be assured I throw the original from my heart as easily. 223

*Abs.* Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that—Here, (*taking out a picture*), here is Miss Lydia Languish.—What a difference !—ay, *there* is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes !—those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar !—and there the half-resentful blush, that *would* have checked the ardour of my thanks Well, all that's past !—all over indeed !—There, madam—in beauty, that copy is not equal to you, but in mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such—that—I cannot find in my heart to part with it. 231

[*Puts it up again.*]

*Lydia.* (*Softening.*) 'Tis *your own* doing, sir—I, I, I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

*Abs.* O, most certainly—sure, now this is much better than being in love !—ha ! ha ! ha !—there's some spirit in *this* !—What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises :—all, that's of no consequence, you know.—To be sure people will say, that miss didn't know her own mind—but never mind that !—or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her—but don't let that fret you. 246

*Lydia.* There's no bearing his insolence.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

*Enter MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY*

*Mrs. Mal.* (*Entering.*) Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

*Lydia.* This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate. [*Sobbing.*]



*Sir Anth.* What the devil's the matter now!—Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the *oddest billing and cooing* I ever heard!—but what the deuce is the meaning of it?—I am quite astonished!

254

*Abs.* Ask the lady, sir.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, mercy!—I'm quite analysed, for my part!—why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

*Lydia.* Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

*Sir. Anth.* Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy!—why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

*Mrs. Mal.* Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there?—you are not like Cerberus, *three* gentlemen at once, are you?

*Abs.* You'll not let me speak—I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

*Lydia.* Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again—there is the man—I now obey you:—for, from this moment, I renounce him for ever. *[Exit LYDIA.]*

*Mrs. Mal.* O mercy! and miracles! what a turn here is—why, sure, captain, you haven't behaved disrespectfully to my niece.

*Sir Anth.* Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—Ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—you have been too lively, Jack. 274

*Abs.* Nay, sir, upon my word—

*Sir Anih.* Come, no lying, Jack—I'm sure 'twas so.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, Lud! Sir Anthony!—O, fie, captain!

*Abs.* Upon my soul, ma'am—

*Sir Anth.* Come, no excuses, Jack; why, your father, you rogue, was so before you:—the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient.—Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia!—why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have. 282

*Abs.* By all that's good, sir—

*Sir Anth.* Zounds! say no more, I tell you—Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace.—You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop:—you must tell her 'tis Jack's way—tell her 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of our family!—Come away, Jack—Ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain!

*[Pushes him out.]*

*Mrs. Mal.* O! Sir Anthony!—O, fie, captain!

*[Exeunt severally.]*

SCENE III—*The North Parade**Enter* SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

*Sir Luc.* I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself.—Upon my conscience ! these officers are always in one's way in love affairs :—I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me !—And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them—unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth.—Hah ! isn't this the captain coming ?—faith it is !—There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow that is mighty provoking ! Who the devil is he talking to ?

*Enter* CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE

*Abs.* To what fine purpose I have been plotting ! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul !—a little gipsy !—I did not think her romance could have made her so damn'd absurd either.—'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life !—I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world !

*Sir Luc.* O, faith ! I'm in the luck of it.—I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose—to be sure I'm just come in the nick ! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly.

[*Sir LUCIUS goes up to ABSOLUTE.*

—With regard to that matter, captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

*Abs.* Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant :—because, sir, I happened, just then to be giving no opinion at all.

*Sir Luc.* That's no reason—For give me leave to tell you, a man may *think* an untruth as well as speak one. 30

*Abs.* Very true, sir ; but if a man never utters his thoughts I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

*Sir Luc.* Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing,

*Abs.* Hark'ee, Sir Lucius,—if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered

it at this interview :—for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive !

*Sir Luc.* I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension—(*Bowing*)—you have named the very thing I would be at.

*Abs.* Very well, sir—I shall certainly not balk your inclinations:—But I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

*Sir Luc.* Pray, sir, be easy—the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands—we should only spoil it, by trying to explain it.—However, your memory is very short—or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week.—So, no more, but name your time and place.

*Abs.* Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better :—let it be this evening—here, by the Spring Gardens.—We shall scarcely be interrupted,

*Sir Luc.* Faith ! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding.—I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness.—However, if it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness, if you'd let us meet in King's Mead Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

*Abs.* 'Tis the same to me exactly.—A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously. 66

*Sir Luc.* If you please, sir ; there will be very pretty smallsword light, though it won't do for a long shot.—So that matter's settled ! and my mind's at ease. [*Exit Sir LUCIUS.*

*Enter FAULKLAND, meeting ABSOLUTE*

*Abs.* Well met.—I was going to look for you—O, Faulkland ! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me ! I'm so vexed, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by and by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause. 75

*Faulk.* What can you mean ?—Has Lydia changed her mind ?—I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

*Abs.* Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints :—



when her love-eye was fixed on me—t'other—her eye of duty, was finely obliqued :—but when duty bid her point that the same way—off t'other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown !

83

*Faulk.* But what's the resource you—

*Abs.* O, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has (*mimicking* Sir LUCIUS) begged leave to have the pleasure of cutting my throat—and I mean to indulge him—that's all.

*Faulk.* Prithee, be serious.

*Abs.* 'Tis fact, upon my soul.—Sir Lucius O'Trigger—you know him by sight—for some affront, which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock : 'tis on that account I wished to see you—you must go with me.

94

*Faulk.* Nay, there must be some mistake, sure.—Sir Lucius shall explain himself—and I dare say matters may be accommodated ;—but this evening, did you say ?—I wish it had been any other time.

*Abs.* Why ?—there will be light enough :—there will (as Sir Lucius says) “be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot.”—Confound his long shots !

102

*Faulk.* But I am myself a good deal ruffled by a difference I have had with Julia—my vile, tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

*Abs.* By heavens ! Faulkland, you don't deserve her.

*Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter*

*Faulk.* O Jack ! this is from Julia—I dread to open it—I fear it may be to take a last leave—perhaps to bid me return her letters—and restore——O ! how I suffer for my folly !

111

*Abs.* Here—let me see.

[*Takes the letter and opens it.*  
Ay, a final sentence, indeed !—'tis all over with you, faith !

*Faulk.* Nay, Jack—don't keep me in suspense.

*Abs.* Here then.—“As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the subject.—I wish to speak with you as soon as possible.—Yours ever and truly,

JULIA'—There's stubbornness and resentment for you !

[Gives him the letter.

Why, man, you don't seem one whit happier at this.

*Faulk.* O, yes, I am—but—but—

123

*Abs.* Confound your *buts* !—You never hear anything that would make another man bless himself but you immediately damn it with a *but*.

*Faulk.* Now, Jack, as you are my friend, own honestly—don't you think there is something forward—something indelicate in this haste to forgive ?—Women should never sue for reconciliation :—that should always come from us.—They should retain their coldness till *woo'ed* to kindness—and their *pardon*, like their *love*, should “not unsought be wont.”

103

*Abs.* I have not patience to listen to you :—thou'rt incorrigible !—so say no more on the subject.—I must go to settle a few matters—let me see you before six—remember, at my lodgings.—A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly—may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little ;—but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim—who has no difficulties but of his own creating—is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion.

[Exit ABSOLUTE.

*Faulk.* I feel his reproaches :—yet I would not change this too exquisite nicety for the gross content with which *he* tramples on the thorns of love.—His engaging me in this duel has started an idea in my head which I will instantly—pursue.—I'll use it as the touch-stone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness—if her love proves pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour !—and once I've stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts for ever : but if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride predominate—'twill be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for.

[Exit FAULKLAND.

## ACT V

### SCENE I—JULIA'S *Dressing-Room*

JULIA *sola*

—How this message has alarmed me ! what dreadful accident can he mean ? why such charge to be alone ?—O, Faulkland !—how many unhappy moments—how many tears have you cost me !

*Enter FAULKLAND*

*Julia.* What means this ?—why this caution, Faulkland ?

*Faulk.* Alas ! Julia, I am come to take a long farewell.

*Julia.* Heavens ! what do you mean ?

*Faulk.* You see before you a wretch, whose life is forfeited—Nay, start not !—the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me.—I left you fretful and passionate—an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel—the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly. O, Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment !

*Julia.* My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune : had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love.—My heart has long known no other guardian—I now entrust my person to your honour—we will fly together.—When safe from pursuit, my father's will may be fulfilled—and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your sorrows, and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to slumbering ; while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

*Faulk.* O Julia ! I am bankrupt in gratitude ! but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution.—Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forgo,



and what little compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love ?

*Julia.* I ask not a moment.—No, Faulkland, I have loved you for yourself; and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act of love.—But let us not linger.—Perhaps this delay—

*Faulk.* 'Twill be better I should not venture out again till dark.—Yet am I grieved to think what numberless distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition ! 44

*Julia.* Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this unhappy act.—I know not whether 'tis so.—but sure that alone can never make us unhappy.—The little I have will be sufficient to support us ; and exile never should be splendid.

*Faulk.* Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my wounded pride, perhaps, may increase the natural fretfulness of my temper, till I become a rude, morose companion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness !

*Julia.* If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you :—one who, by bearing *your* infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you *so* to bear the evils of your fortune. 62

*Faulk.* Julia, I have proved you to the quick ! and with this useless device I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition ?

*Julia.* Has no such disaster happened as you related ?

*Faulk.* I am ashamed to own that it was pretended ; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which never can be repeated ; but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me tomorrow, in the face of Heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly, by years of tender adoration. 73

*Julia.* Hold, Faulkland !—that you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I

rejoice !—These are tears of thankfulness for that ! But that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my haart, gives me now a pang more keen than I can express !

*Faulk.* By heav'ns ! Julia—

*Julia.* Yet hear me.—My father loved you, Faulkland ! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me ; in his presence I pledged my hand—joyfully pledged it—where before I had given my heart. When soon after, I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty as well as my affection ; hence I have been content to bear from you what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another.—I will not upbraid you by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity.—

*Faulk.* I confess it all ! yet hear—

*Julia.* After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary ! I now see it is not in your nature to be content or confident in love. With this conviction—I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention and unrepublishing kindness might in time reform your temper. I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you ; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault at the expense of one who never would contend with you. 103

*Faulk.* Nay, but, Julia, by my soul and honour, if after this——

*Julia.* But one word more.—As my faith has once been given you, I never will barter it with another.—I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity ; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper, which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement.—All I request of you is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of—let it not be your *least* regret, that it lost you the love of one—who would have followed you in beggary through the world ! [*Exit.*

*Faulk.* She's gone !—for ever !—There was an awful resolution in her manner that riveted me to my place.—O fool !—dolt !—barbarian !—Cursed as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow-wretches, kind Fortune sent a heaven-gifted

cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side!—I must now haste to my appointment.—Well, my mind is turned for such a scene.—I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here.—O Love!—tormentor!—fiend!—whose influence, like the moon's, acting on men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course, and urges sensibility to madness!

[Exit.

*Enter MAID and LYDIA*

*Maid.* My mistress, ma'am, I know, was here just now—perhaps she is only in the next room. [Exit MAID.

*Lydia.* Heigh-ho!—Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him.

134

*Enter JULIA*

*Lydia.* O, Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation.—Lud! child, what's the matter with you?—You have been crying!—I'll be hanged, if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

*Julia.* You mistake the cause of my uneasiness!—Something has flurried me a little.—Nothing that you can guess at.—I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister!

[Aside.

*Lydia.* Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them.—You know who Beverley proves to be?

145

*Julia.* I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for, I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject without a serious endeavour to counteract your caprice.

*Lydia.* So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one!—but I don't care—I'll never have him.

152

*Julia.* Nay, Lydia—

*Lydia.* Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last.—There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise! so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!—O, I shall die with



disappointment !

*Julia.* I don't wonder at it !

*Lydia.* Now—sad reverse ! what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparation with a bishop's licence, and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar ; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster !

*Julia.* Melancholy, indeed !

*Lydia.* How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow !—How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue !—There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically ! he shivering with cold and I with apprehension ! and while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame and glow with mutual ardour !—Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love.

*Julia.* If I were in spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you ; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to enreat you not to let a man, who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice, which I know too well caprice can inflict.

*Lydia.* O, Lud ! what has brought my aunt here ?

*Enter MRS. MALAPROP, FAG, and DAVID*

*Mrs. Mal.* So ! so ! here's fine work !—here's fine suicide, paracide, and simulation going on in the fields ! and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the antistrophe !

*Julia.* For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this ?

*Mrs. Mal.* That gentleman can tell you—'twas he enveloped the affair to me.

*Lydia.* Do, sir, will you inform us ?

[To FAG.

*Fag.* Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding, if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

*Lydia.* But quick ! quick, sir !

*Lydia*

*Fag.* True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this nature ; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost !

*Lydia.* O patience !—Do, ma'am, for Heaven's sake ! tell us what is the matter ? 210

*Mrs. Mal.* Why ! murder's the matter ! slaughter's the matter ! killing's the matter !—but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

*Lydia.* Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

*Fag.* Why then, ma'am, as to murder—I cannot take upon me to say—and as to slaughter, or manslaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

*Lydia.* But who, sir,—who are engaged in this ?

*Fag.* Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to—a very pretty behaved gentleman ! We have lived much together, and always on terms. 222

*Lydia.* But who is this ? who ? who ? who ?

*Fag.* My master, ma'am—my master—I speak of my master.

*Lydia.* Heavens ! What, Captain Absolute !

*Mrs. Mal.* O, to be sure, you are frightened now !

*Julia.* But who are with him, sir ?

*Fag.* As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I. 230

*Julia.* Do speak, friend. [To DAVID.

*David.* Look'ee, my lady—by the mass ! there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with fire-arms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside !—This, my lady, I say, has an angry favour.

*Julia.* But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend ?

*David.* My poor master—under favour for mentioning him first.—You know me, my lady—I am David—and my master of course is, or was, Squire Acres.—Then comes Squire Faulkland. 242

*Julia.* Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, fie—it would be very inelegant in us :—we

should only participate things.

*David.* Ah ! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives—they are desperately given, believe me.—Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir Lucius O'Trigger !—O mercy ! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape ?—Why, how you stand, girls ! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrifications ! 253

*Lydia.* What are we to do, madam ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief !—Here, friend—you can show us the place ?

*Fag.* If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you.—David, do you look for Sir Anthony. [Exit DAVID.

*Mrs. Mal.* Come, girls !—this gentleman will exhort us.—Come, Sir, you'r our envoy—lead the way, and we'll precede. 262

*Fag.* Not a step before the ladies for the world !

*Mrs. Mal.* You're sure you know the spot.

*Fag.* I think I can find it, ma'am : and one good thing is, we shall hear the report of the pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them ;—never fear, ma'am, never fear. [Exeunt, he talking.

## SCENE II—South Parade

*Enter ABSOLUTE, putting his sword under his great-coat*

*Abs.* A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog.—How provoking this is Faulkland ! never punctual ! I shall be obliged to go without him at last. O, the devil ! here's Sir Anthony !—how shall I escape him ?

[Muffles up his face, and takes a circle to go off.

*Enter Sir ANTHONY*

*Sir Anth.* How one may be deceived at a little distance ! Only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack !—Hey !—Gad's life ! it is.—Why, Jack,—what are you afraid of ? hey ! sure I am right.—Why, Jack—Jack Absolute ! [Goes up to him.



*Abs.* Really, sir, you have the advantage of me :—I don't remember ever to have had the honour—my name is Saunderson, at your service. 13

*Sir Anth.* Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey ? why, zounds ! it is—Stay— [Looks up his face.

So, so—your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson !—Why, you scoundrel ! what tricks are you after now ?

*Abs.* O ! a joke, sir, a joke !—I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

*Sir Anth.* You did ! well, I am glad you were so lucky : but what are you muffled up so for?—what's this for ?—hey? 22

*Abs.* 'Tis cool, sir ; isn't it ?—rather chilly somehow—but I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

*Sir Anth.* Stay—Why, I thought you were looking for me ?—Pray, Jack, where is't you are going ?

*Abs.* Going, sir !

*Sir Anth.* Ay—where are you going ?

*Abs.* Where am I going ?

*Sir Anth.* You unmannerly puppy ! 30

*Abs.* I was going, sir, to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up if I could ;—and I was looking for you, sir,—to—to—

*Sir Anth.* To go with you, I suppose.—Well, come along.

*Abs.* O ! zounds ! no, sir, not for the world !—I wished to meet with you, sir, to—to—to—You find it cool I'm sure, sir—you'd better not stay out.

*Sir Anth.* Cool ! not at all.—Well, Jack—and what will you say to Lydia ? 40

*Abs.* O, sir, beg her pardon, humour her—promise and vow :—but I detain you, sir—consider the cold air on your gout.

*Sir Anth.* O, not at all !—not at all !—I'm in no hurry.—Ah ! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here—

[Putting his hand to ABSOLUTE's breast.  
Hey ! what the deuce have you got here ?

*Abs.* Nothing. sir—nothing.

*Sir Anth.* What's this ?—here's something damn'd hard. 50

*Abs.* O, trinkets, sir ! trinkets—a bauble for Lydia !

*Sir Anth.* Nay, let me see your taste.

[Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.]

Trinkets !—a bauble for Lydia !—Zounds ! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you ?

*Abs.* Ha ! ha ! ha !—I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

*Sir Anth.* You didn't ?—Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly.

*Abs.* Sir, I'll explain to you.—You know, sir, Lydia is romantic—dev'lish romantic, and very absurd of course:—now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me—to unsheath this sword—and swear—I'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet !

*Sir Anth.* Fall upon a fiddle-stick's end !—why I suppose it is the very thing that would please her.—Get along, you fool.

*Abs.* Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear.—O, Lydia !—forgive me, or this pointed steel"—says I.

*Sir Anth.* "O, booby ! stay away, and welcome"—says she.—Get along !—and damn your trinkets !

[Exit ABSOLUTE.]

*Enter DAVID, running*

*David.* Stop him ! stop him ! Murder ! Thief ! Fire !—Stop fire ! Stop fire !—O ! Sir Anthony—call ! call ! bid'm stop ! Murder ! Fire !

*Sir Anth.* Fire ! Murder ! where ?

*David.* Oons ! he's out of sight ! and I'am out of breath ! for my part ! O, Sir Anthony, why didn't you stop him ? why didn't you stop him ?

*Sir Anth.* Zounds ! the fellow's mad !—Stop whom ? stop Jack ?

*David.* Ay, the captain, sir !—there's murder and slaughter—

*Sir Anth.* Murder !

*David.* Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields : there's fighting going on, sir—bloody sword-and-gum-fighting !

*Sir Anth.* Who are going to fight, dunce ?

*David.* Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony :—everybody is going to fight, my poor master, Sir Lucius O'Trigger,

your son, the captain—

91

*Sir Anth.* O, the dog !—I see his tricks ;—do you know the place ?

*David.* King's Mead Fields.

*Sir Anth.* You know the way ?

*David.* Not an inch :—but I'll call the mayor—aldermen—constables—churchwardens—and beadles—we can't be too many to part them.

*Sir Anth.* Come along—give me your shoulder ! We'll get assistance as we go—the lying villain !—Well, I shall be in such a frenzy !—So—this was the history of his trinkets ! I'll bauble him !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III—*King's Mead Fields*

Sir LUCIUS and ACRES. *with pistols*

*Acres.* By my valour ! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance—Od's levels and aims !—I say it is a good distance.

*Sir Luc.* Is it for muskets or small field-pieces ? upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me.—Stay now.—I'll show you.

[*Measures paces along the stage.*]

There now, that is a very pretty distance—a pretty gentleman's distance.

*Acres.* Zounds ! we might as well fight in a sentrybox ! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off, the cooler I shall take my aim.

11

*Sir Luc.* Faith ! then I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight !

*Acres.* No, Sir Lucius, but I should think forty or eight-and-thirty yards—

*Sir Luc.* Pho ! pho ! nonsense ! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

*Acres.* Od's bullets, no !—by my valour ! there is no merit in killing him so near : do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me bring him down at a long shot :—a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me !

21

*Sir Luc.* Well—the gentleman's friend and I must settle that.—But tell me now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there



any little will or commission I could execute for you ?

*Acres.* I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius—but I don't understand—

*Sir Luc.* Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk—and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it—I say it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

*Acres.* A quietus !

*Sir Luc.* For instance, now—if that should be the case—would you choose to be pickled and sent heme ?—or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey ?—I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

*Acres.* Pickled !—Snug lying in the Abbey !—Od's tremors ! Sir Lucius, don't talk so !

*Sir Luc.* I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before ?

*Acres.* No, Sir Lucius, never before.

*Sir Luc.* Ah ! that's a pity !—there's nothing like being used to a thing.—Pray, now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot ?

*Acres.* Od's files !—I've practised that—there, Sir Lucius—  
[*Puts himself in an attitude.*]

A side-front. hey ?—Od' ! I'll make myself small enough :—I'll stand edgeways.

*Sir Luc.* Now—you're quite out—for if you stand so when I take my aim—  
[*Levelling at him.*]

*Acres.* Zounds ! Sir Lucius—are you sure it is not cocked ?

*Sir Luc.* Never fear.

*Acres.* But—but—you don't know—it may go off of its own head !

*Sir Luc.* Pho ! be easy—Well, now if I hit you in the body, my bullet has a double chance—for if it misses a vital part of your right side—'twill be very hard if it don't succeed on the left !

*Acres.* A vital part !

*Sir Luc.* But, there—fix yourself so—  
—let me see the broad-side of your full front—there—now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do any harm at all.

*Acres.* Clean through me !—a ball or two clean through me !

*Sir Luc.* Ay—may they—and it is much the genteelest attitude into the bargain.

*Acres.* Look'ee ! Sir Lucius—I'd just as lieve be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one—so, by my valour ! I will stand edgeways. 71

*Sir Luc.* (*Looking at his watch.*) Sure they don't mean to disappoint us—Hah !—no, faith !—I think I see them coming.

*Acres.* Hey !—what !—coming !

*Sir Luc.* Ay—Who are those yonder getting over the stile ?

*Acres.* There are two of them indeed !—well—let them come—hey, Sir Lucius !—we—we—we—we—won't run.

*Sir Luc.* Run !

*Acres.* No—I say—we *won't* run, by my valour ! 80

*Sir Luc.* What the devil's the matter with you ?

*Acres.* Nothing—nothing—my dear friend—my dear Sir Lucius—but I—I—I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

*Sir Luc.* O, fie !—consider your honour.

*Acres.* Ay—true—my honour—Do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two every now and then about my honour.

*Sir Luc.* Well, here they're coming. [*Looking.*

*Acres.* Sir Lucius—if I wa'n't with you, I should almost think I was afraid—If my valour should leave me ! Valour will come and go. 92

*Sir Luc.* Then pray keep it fast, while you have it.

*Acres.* Sir Lucius—I doubt it is going—yes—my valour is certainly going !—it is sneaking off !—I feel it oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands !

*Sir Luc.* Your honour—your honour.—Here they are.

*Acres.* O mercy !—now—that I was safe at Cold Hall ! or could be shot before I was aware !

*Enter FAULKLAND and ABSOLUTE*

*Sir Luc.* Gentlemen, your most obedient.—Hath !—what, Captain Absolute !—So, I suppose, sir, you are come here. just like myself—to do a kind office, first for your friend—then to proceed to business on your own account. 104

*Acres.* What, Jack !—my dear Jack !—my dear friend !

*Abs.* Hark'ee, Bob, Beverley's hand.

*Sir Luc.* Well, Mr. Acres—I don't blame your saluting the gentleman civilly.—So, Mr. Beverley (*to FAULKLAND*), if you'll choose your weapons, the captain and I will measure the ground. 110

*Faulk.* My weapons, sir !

*Acres.* Od's life ! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight Mr. Faulkland ; these are my particular friends.

*Sir Luc.* What, sir, did not you come here to fight Mr. Acres ?

*Faulk.* Not I, upon my word, sir.

*Sir Luc.* Well, now, that's mighty provoking ! But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on purpose for the game—you won't be so cantankerous as to spoil the party by sitting out. *Quarrel some & support* 120

*Abs.* O, pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir Lucius.

*Faulk.* Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter—

*Acres.* No, no, Mr. Faulkland—I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian—Look'ee Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight ; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lieve let it alone.

*Sir Luc.* Observe me, Mr. Acres—I must not be trifled with. You have certainly challenged somebody—and you came here to fight him.—Now, if that gentleman is willing to represent him—I can't see, for my soul, why it isn't just the same thing. 132

*Acres.* Zounds. Sir Lucius—I tell you, 'tis one Beverley I challenged—a fellow, you see, that dare not show his face ! If he were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly !—

*Abs.* Hold, Bob—let me set you right—there is no such man as Beverley in the case.—The person who assumed that name is before you ; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please. 141

*Sir Luc.* Well, this is lucky.—Now you have an opportunity—

*Acres.* What, quarrel with my dear friend Jack Absolute—not if he were fifty Beverleys ! Zounds ! Sir Lucius, you would



not have me so unnatural.

*Sir Luc.* Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has oozed away with a vengeance !

*Acres.* Not in the least ! Od's backs and abettors ! I'll be your second with all my heart—and if you should get a *quietus*, you may command me entirely. I'll get you *snug lying* in the *Abbey here* ; or *pickle* you, and send you over to Blunderbuss Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure. 154

*Sir Luc.* Pho ! pho ! you are little better than a coward.

*Acres.* Mind, gentlemen, he calle me a *coward* ; coward was the word, by my valour !

*Sir Luc.* Well, sir ?

*Acres.* Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 't isn't that I mind the word coward—*coward* may be said in joke.—But if you had called me a *poltroon*, od's daggers and balls— 162

*Sir Luc.* Well, sir ?

*Acres.* I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

*Sir Luc.* Pho ! you are beneath my notice.

*Abs.* Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres—He is a most *determined dog*—called in the country, *Fighting Bob*.—He generally *kills a man a week*—don't you, Bob ?

*Acres.* Ay—at home !— 171

*Sir Luc.* Well then, captain, 'tis we must begin—so come out, my little counsellor—(*draws his sword*)—and ask the gentleman, whether he will resign the lady without forcing you to proceed against him ?

*Abs.* Come on then, sir—(*draws*) ; since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

*Enter Sir ANTHONY, DAVID and the WOMEN*

*David.* Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony ; knock down my master in particular—and bind his hands over to their good behaviour !

*Sir Anth.* Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy—how came you in a duel, sir ?

*Abs.* Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I ; 'twas he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his Majesty.

*Sir Anth.* Here's a pretty fellow ! I eatch him going to cut

a man's throat, and he tells me, he serves his Majesty ! Zounds ! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects ?

*Abs.* Sir, I tell you ! that gentleman called me out without explaining his reasons ? 191

*Sir Anth.* Gad ! sir, how came you call my son out without explaining your reasons ?

*Sir Luc.* Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

*Sir Anth.* Zounds ! Jack, how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies—Captain Absolute, come here—How could you intimidate us so ?—Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you. 202

*Abs.* For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am ?

*Mrs. Mal.* Nay, no delusions to the past—Lydia is convinced ; speak, child.

*Sir Luc.* With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here—I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence—Now mark—

*Lydia.* What is it you mean, sir ?

*Sir Luc.* Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now—this is no time for trifling. *Bolding*

*Lydia.* 'Tis true, sir ; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections. 214

*Abs.* O ! my little angel, say you so ?—Sir Lucius—I perceive there must be some mistake here with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced, that I should not fear to support a real injury—you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency—I ask your pardon.—But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever. 223

*Sir Anth.* Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

*Acres.* Mind, I give up all my claim.—I make no pretensions to anything in the world—and if I can't get a wife without fighting for her, by my valour ! I'll live a bachelor.

*Sir Luc.* Captain, give me your hand—an affront handsome-

ly acknowledged becomes an obligation—and as for the lady—if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here—

[Takes out letters.

*Mrs. Mal.* O, he will dissolve my mystery! Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake—perhaps I can illuminate— 235

*Sir Luc.* Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business.—Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

*Lydia.* Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

[LYDIA and ABSOLUTE walk aside.

*Mrs. Mal.* Sir Lucius O'Trigger—ungrateful as you are—I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia. 242

*Sir Luc.* You Delia—pho! pho! be easy.

*Mrs. Mal.* Why, thou barbarous vandyke—those letters are mine.—When you are more sensible of my benignity—perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

*Sir Luc.* Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick upon me, I am equally beholden to you.—And to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain. 253

*Abs.* I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius; but here's my friend, fighting Bob, unprovided for.

*Sir Luc.* Hah! little Valour—here, will you make your fortune?

*Acres.* Od's wrinkles! No.—But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive; but if ever I give you a chance of pickling me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all. 261

*Sir Anth.* Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.

*Mrs. Mal.* Oh, Sir Anthony!—men are all barbarians.

[All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND.

*Julia.* He seems dejected and unhappy—not sullen—there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me—O woman! how true should be your judgement, when your resolution is so weak! [aside.

*Faulk.* Julia!—how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume—yet Hope is the child of Penitence. 271

*Julia.* Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me than I am now in wanting incli-



nation to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

*Faulk.* Now I shall be blessed indeed !

277

[*Sir ANTHONY comes forward.*]

*Sir Anth.* What's going on here ?—So you have been quarreling too, I warrant ?—Come, Julia, I never interfered before ; but let me have a hand in the matter at last.—All the faults I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the *delicacy* and *warmth* of his affection for you.—There, marry him directly, Julia ; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly !

[*The rest come forward.*]

*Sir Luc.* Come, now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person, but what is content ; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better—

*Acres.* You are right, Sir Lucius.—So, Jack, I wish you joy—Mr. Faulkland the same.—Ladies,—come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, od's tabors and pipes ! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms—and I insist on your all meeting me there.

294

*Sir Anth.* Gad ! sir, I like your spirit ; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

*Faulk.* Our partners are stolen from us, Jack—I hope to be congratulated by each other—*yours* for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart ; and *mine*, for having, by her gentleness and *candour*, reformed the unhappy temper of one who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

305

*Abs.* Well, Faulkland, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets, of love—with this difference only, that you always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while I—

*Lydia.* Was alwas obliged to *me* for it, hey ! Mr. Modesty ? But come, no more of that—our happiness is a now as unalloyed as general.

312

*Julia.* Then let us study to preserve it so : and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its

pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers ; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them, when its leaves are dropped !

*[Exeunt omnes.]*

## EPILOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MRS. BULKLEY

LADIES, for *you*—I heard our poet say—  
He'd try to coax some *moral* from his play :  
"One moral's plain," cried I, "without more fuss ;  
Man's social hapiness all rests on us :  
Through all the drama—whether damn'd or not—  
*Love* gilds the *scene*, and *women* guide the *plot*.  
From every rank obedience is our due—  
D'ye doubt ?—The world's great stage shall prove it true."

The Cit, well skill'd to shun domestic strife,  
Will sup abroad ;—but first, he'll ask his *wife* ;  
*John Trot*, his friend, for once will do the same,  
But then—he'll just *step home to tell his dome*.

10

The *surly Squire* at noon resolves to rule,  
And half the day—Zounds !—Madam is a fool !  
Convinced at night, the vanquish'd victor says,  
*Ah, Kate ! you women have such coaxing ways !*

The *jolly Toper* chides each tardy blade,  
Till reeling Bacchus calls on Love for aid :  
Then with each toast he sees fair humpers swim,  
And kisses Chloe on the sparkling brim !

20

Nay, I have heard that Statesmen—great and wise—  
Will *sometimes* counsel with a lady's eyes !  
The servile suitors watch her various face,  
She smiles preferment, or she frowns disgrace,  
Curtsies a pension here – there nods a place.

Nor with less awe, in scenes of humbler life,  
Is *view'd* the *mistress*, or is *heard* the *wife*.  
The poorest Peasant of the poorest soil,  
The child of poverty, and heir to toil,  
Early from radiant Love's impartial light  
Steals one small spark to cheer his world of night :  
Dear spark ! that oft through winter's chilling woes  
Is all the warmth his little cottage knows !

30

R 50



The wand'ring *Tar*, who not for *years* has press'd  
The widow'd partner of his *day* of rest,  
On the cold deck, far from her arms removed.  
Still hums the ditty which his Susan loved ;  
And while around the cadence rude is blown,  
The boatswain whistles in a softer tone.

The *Soldier*, fairly proud of wounds and toil, 40  
Pants for the *triumph* of his Nancy's smile ;  
But ere the battle should he list' her 'cries,  
The lover trembles—and the hero dies !  
That heart, by war and honour steel'd to fear,  
Droops on a sigh and sickens at a tear !

But ye more cautious, ye nice-judging few,  
Who give to Beauty only Beauty's due,  
Though friends to Love—ye view with deep regret  
Our conquests marr'd, our triumph incomplete, 50  
Till polish'd Wit more lasting charms disclose.  
And Judgement fix the darts which Beauty throws !  
—In female breasts did sense and merit rule,  
The lover's mind would ask no other school ;  
Shamed into sense, the scholars of our eyes,  
Our beaux from *gallantry* would soon be wise ;  
Would gladly light, their homage to improve,  
The lamp of Knowledge at the torch of Love !

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**NOTES**  
**ON**  
**SHERIDAN'S THE RIVALS.**





## NOTES

### PREFACE

#### (A) Circumstances that led to the Composition of the 'Preface'

It is important to remember a few facts about the history of the composition of the play and its first two representations on the stage to enable us to understand the full meaning of the preface.

Sheridan had little experience of either the stage or dramatic writing before he wrote "The Rivals" at 23. The play was enacted on the stage on 17th January, 1775 when it proved a dismal failure on account of (a) its excessive length, especially of the Faulkland-Julia scenes and (b) the poor acting of Lee. Sheridan was not at all disheartened by the initial failure but withdrew it and thoroughly revised it after cutting down the inordinate length of certain scenes. Eleven days afterwards, the play was restaged with a new actor in the role of Sir Lucius on 28th January, 1775, when it was a tremendous success and has continued to be so ever since.

Encouraged with his success, Sheridan was prompted to add a new Prologue to the play which was read out on the tenth night of its presentation, ridiculing the Sentimental Comedy which had become undeservedly popular with the age and giving his own ideas about what a comedy should be and, later, to write a "preface" for readers of his play, which is a kind of apologia explaining his reason for the initial failure of the drama, as originally written out by him and thanking all concerned with its success.

#### (B) Analysis of the Preface

A Preface is to the reader, what a Prologue is to an audience in the theatre. It is a kind of request to the reader for his indulgent appreciation. A play which has been successful on the stage, needs, however, no elaborate Preface, for its successful stage-representation is *ipso-facto* a recognition of its intrinsic merits. A bad play which has been once rejected by the audience, cannot be bolstered up, with a Preface or supplementary explanation so that its readers can see their way to appreciate

it. Such a play with a vindication to win for itself a favourable opinion of readers is like a weak case supported by useless pleading by a lawyer at the law court. Sheridan's play is not a weak play but one that has met with tremendous success and approbation of the theatre-going public. Its tremendous success in its present form has a history behind this. The original play had to be withdrawn as it proved a dismal failure on the stage because certain errors and imperfections had crept into it. It was also adversely criticised. Sheridan's purpose in the Preface is, therefore, to (a) admit and explain these defects and imperfections that had crept into the play in its original form ; (b) reply to unjust criticisms of the play and (c) to absolve others connected with its first representation on the stage who have been made targets of criticism rather unfairly and sought to be made responsible for its failure.

(1) Certain defects had crept into the original play. These certainly deserved the censure of critics and of the audience, who constitute the best judges. All these were due, in the main, to his inexperience as a dramatic writer and of conditions on the stage or stage-craft and not to an innate incapacity to be a successful play-wright. The continued patronage, the same audience has extended to the subsequent revision of the play, has proved this.

(2) Critics have unjustly blamed the Managers of the theatre for the inordinate length of some of the scenes. The fact is that when the play was first put in the hands of Mr. Harris, the Manager of the Covent Garden Theatre did advise the dramatist to cut down the inordinate length of the drama in certain places as quickly as possible, as there was no other play suitable for stage-representation at the time but there were many others to which the Manager would have pointed out but refrained from doing so, as he did not like to wound the vanity of a young author by pruning as much as he would have liked to have done. Sheridan knew all this but chose to cut down some more scenes only after seeing the first reactions of the audience.

(3) As regards the charge of plagiarism, while his ignorance of plays by other writers involved him in many errors, it proved to him a blessing in disguise. His imagination was thus left free to invent situations and characters. Had it been otherwise, his brain would have been full of faded ideas to influence his imagination duly to mar his originality of conception.

(4) Critics, motivated by malice, are beneath his notice. Some part of the criticisms was directed against weak portions of the play which he could not see earlier though so obvious. As an author of the play, he has every reason to regard the reactions of the audience on the first night of its performance with respect, having been motivated by a sense of correct literary judgment and not out of malice.

(5) Sheridan had no intention of satirising the typical Irish character through his portraiture of Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

(6) Sheridan thanks the actors and principals of the theatre for their help.

### (C) The Preface As A Piece of Self-Criticism

“Lowliness is a young man’s ladder”—This quotation from Shakespeare may well be said to be the keynote of his Preface which forms an excellent apologia, humble but at the same time dignified, candid, and critical. He confesses his own experience but at the same time, he is fully conscious of his latent powers as a dramatic writer. He owns up his own responsibility, does not palliate his short-comings nor does he shift the blame on others. He takes a rational attitude to critics. He is conscious of the fact that it is the business of an inexperienced author to meet the arguments of impartial critics because his play stands or falls by their critical judgment. He has nothing but contempt for puny critics who are severe on him out of malice. But as regards his contention that he cannot possibly have borrowed anything in plot, character, situation etc., from his predecessors and contemporary writers, simply because he has not read their plays at all, a critical examination of his play shows that he is definitely not original in his invention. On the contrary, many of his characters conform to types already introduced by his great master, Ben Jonson and certain Restoration comedians; even the love-intrigues which form an important part of his plot-construction, are taken from the writings of many Restoration dramatists, though in spite of these borrowings and resemblances, he can very well claim originality in fusing and integrating all these diverse elements into an artistic whole in the play.

### PROLOGUE

**Serjeant at Law and Attorney**—A *Serjeant at law* was formerly a member of the highest order of barristers; the system was abolished in 1877. *Attorney* worked under such Serjeants



at law, by preparing a case for the barristers or counsels, and could practice in the Common Law Courts, while a solicitor could in a court of equity.

1. A vite cramp hand—a very bad, *cramped* handwriting, so as to be incapable of being read. Cramp is a nervous disorder, making the movement of the limb difficult. A *cramp* of the hand would make the hand-writing irregular and undecipherable.

4. The scrawl—the paper including the hand-writing or the hand-writing itself.

6. A poet's brief—*brief* is a legal phrase, meaning a summary of facts and points of law given to a counsel in charge of a case, defending a client.

12. Son of Phoebus—Poets. The fleet—The debtors' prison in London, where people who did not pay their debts were lodged. A picture of this life in debtors' prison is to be found in *Pickwick Papers* of Dickens. By this hit at the poets, the author refers to the poverty of the profession of poets.

13—14. Sprig of bays—The plant known as *Laurus Nobilis*, whose leaves and twigs were woven into a garland as a reward for a conqueror or a poet. Hence a poet comes before us to plead, not with the usual wig of a lawyer, but the twigs of a poet.

15. Full bottomed—reference to the two types of wigs worn in those days. The Bob-wig had the bottom turned up in bobs or curls, in contradistinction to a full-bottomed wig. The Serjeant speaks contemptuously of poets displaying their heap of laurel leaves, or fame on an invitation or a chance, in an elegant curly hand-writing. *Leaves* and *groves* used because of *Bays*.

19. My client's place supply—In his absence, plead for him, with the full dress of a Serjeant.

21—23. All those blushing.....on the case—"Do you rise before the Court, with all the usual pretence of hesitation and shyness before the judges."

27. 'There's no appeal—"This, the audience of a theatre, is the final court of judgement, against which there is no place where an appeal can be made"—unlike the court, where there are higher powers to appeal to.

28. **Tricking.....edge of law**—By clever tricking upon words and their connotation, to escape from the severe penalty of law.

29. **Damn'd.....by flaw**—If condemned on grounds of equity, manage to save yourself by pointing out some defect in legal proceedings and have the sentence of judgement quashed.

31. **No writ of error.....Drury Lane**—Just as in an appeal against a lower court, we appeal to High Court on grounds of *writ of error*, or on ground that there is some mistake in the legal proceedings etc., in the same way, can we appeal from this theatre to Drury Lane Theatre? If the play is damned in one, can we go to the other? No!

33. **Costs of suit**—when a case is dismissed, the party winning the case is awarded costs or the expenses of the law suit. Here, the idea is that even if we do not fully win the case, your kind behaviour promises that we may succeed to some extent.

34. **Spleen.....hoarded fury**—If the jury seems to be full of anger and ill-temper against a petitioner, it is a sad condition for him. For, frowns the audience of a theatre is equal to a sentence of transportation from a judge; a hiss, equal to being sentenced to be hanged. (One way of showing the disapproval of a drama was to hiss it off the stage.)

39. **Right of challenge**—When a jury is to be appointed, the lawyer of the defending side has a right to question the appointment of a person on the jury. If a person's name is thus challenged, he is not elected to serve on the jury. But here, the audience which is the jury, seem to be such a frank and candid jury, that my client, the poet, does not want to use his right of challenge and will accept the jury as it is.

40—41. **Newsman, critic, wit**—These are natural enemies of an author, who would write against him in the papers. But even these people, though present in the audience today, will not be challenged.

42. **His faults**—The poet's *i. e.*, his client's faults.

44. **All respecting**—thus, having respect for all the jurors or the whole of the audience, he appeals to all of them, and his drama will stand a fall, *i. e.*, will be successful or damned by the general opinion of all of them.

47. **Cast**—Legal, for condemned, or found guilty.

49. **Indulgent**—the court was considerate to the real grounds

of the case, and without being strict in the rigid application of the laws ; the judges granted a *rule* or an order or division for a retrial of the case.

52. **Mend your pleadings**—The play was first produced on January 17, 1773, at the Covent Garden Theatre, but was hissed out, because of excessive length of the play, as well as the hopelessly bad acting of some performers. In *ten* days, however, the drama was recast and again presented to the public, with a change of actors also, and proved a gratifying success. Hence, *mending your pleading*, means changing your presentation of the drama, to which the answer is that it has been *amended* or altered.

56. **Refreshing fee**—an extra fee paid to a counsel when the case is adjourned or continued from one term or sitting to another.

#### PROLOGUE *revised*

4. **The Muse**—Here stands for the goddess of comedy, Thalia. The Muses according to the Greeks, were nine in number : Clio, the Muse of history ; Euterpe, of lyric poetry ; Thalia, of comedy and idyllic poetry ; Melpomene, or tragedy ; Terpsichore, of music and dancing ; Erato, of love poetry ; Calliope, of epic poetry ; Urania, of astronomy ; and Polyhymnia, of singing and harmony.

7. **Look on this form**—In the Covent Garden Theatre, the figure of Comedy was on one side of proscenium or the stage ; on the other side was the figure of Tragedy. **Humour**—not in the sense in which it was used in the time of Ben Jonson, but in the simple, plain sense, which causes the face of the Muse of comedy to smile, and thus a dimple is seen on the cheek. The next few lines indicate the appearance of the Muse of comedy, with her aims and methods which are indicated—hints of love, gay invention, *i. e.*, laughable and humorous situations or plots, when the light of comedy covers or hides the satire in a drama, or where the blush of shyness is hidden, though produced by witty remark. Is it the purpose of comedy to teach—Does her appearance indicate that she is born to teach, or is it to please ? She is young and cannot be expected to be old and experienced, and hence such serious remarks are not suited to her appearance. Her smiling lips would rebel against any effort attempted to make her be grave.

22. **The Goddess of the woeful countenance**—the Muse of



tragedy or the sentimental Muse. with a sad, grave face.

24. **A sprig of rue**—rue was a plant of fetid odour and acid taste, used as a stimulant in medicine. Hence, bitter taste in the mouth, and thus, gloomy, sad ; bitter appearance is symbolised in her face. **The Pilgrim's Progress**—The novel by John Bunyan—or is it symbolical of the nature of serious drama which deals with the purpose of life, which is like the pilgrimage of an individual. In other words, the moral and serious side, which dominates such a drama, sometimes ending in the repentance of the villain etc.

25. **Too chaste**—too cold, almost, like a thing of stone or marble, or like the moon, symbol of chastity, and not a physical body.

26. **Primly.....Wood**—the figure, made of wood, which symbolised the prim or correct, exact dress of the Muse.

27. **Usurpation.....stand**—If allowed, she would usurp the place which is legitimately that of comedy, and create a good deal of sorrow etc.

28. **Snatch the dagger**—How could comedy have dagger in her hand ? Does it mean the dagger of lath or wood, which the traditional Vice of the old English moralities (a type of drama) used to carry ? Thus snatching the dagger from the hand of comedy where it is not dangerous at all, the sentimental Muse would use it to produce a flood of tears, with the drama ending in a terrible bloodshed.

The proper names mentioned are those of the actors in the revised drama, who would be required to play, not the comic parts as here, but some tragic parts.

37—39. **Can our light.....aid to ask**—Holy laws or religion etc., do not require the assistance of frivolous or light-natured comedy to inculcate virtues among people. Such an attempt as support of a great cause by a small thing merely spoils, not forwards the great cause.

41. **Their favourite**—the sentimental Muse, who with a serious face is watching, and would point out the moral faults she hates.

#### ACT I—SCENE I

5. **Excuse my glove**—To shake hands with gloves on would be a sign of incivility.

6. **Charioteers**—a chariot was a light four-wheeled pleasure-carriage which was fashionable in England in the eighteenth century.

7. **Who the deuce**—"Who the devil"—but a milder form of oath.

8. **Bath**—a fashionable place in Somersetshire, famous for its hot springs—and hence a resort for the rich, fashionable as well as sickly people.

10. **Postillion**—one who rides on the near horse of the leaders' or of a pair drawing a carriage.

18. **Will stare**—with surprise, for this is where young Captain Absolute is least expected.

21. **Ensign**—The lowest of the commissioned officers in an infantry.

22. **Ha'n't**—have not changed for the better *i. e.*, your leaving the service of one, to take over that of another has not been advantageous to you.

31—33. **The Ensign half.....me**—for the time-being it is not Captain Absolute who is supposed to be here, but Ensign Beverley, who is on 'duty !'

39—41. **Love.....days of Jupiter**—Jupiter is the chief of the Greek Gods, known also as Zeus. There are so many classical stories of his assuming the shape of animals or birds, such as swan to Leda, as a bull to Europa, and to Danae, in a shower of gold.

44. **Now if he had shamm'd general**—Why does he pretend to be less than what he actually is ? If one is to show or pretend, one generally pretends to be *greater* than what one really is, never *less*.

48. **Half-pay Ensign**—The salary or allowance is reduced when the person or officer is not on active service or is retired.

51. **Odd taste**—This is strange desire, to want to marry not a rich man's son, but a poor Ensign. Generally, before people decide to marry, they think of the financial gain also;—this was true specially of the aristocracy in Europe.

53. **Stocks**—The share of companies. At that time, one of the sources of permanent income was investment in such stocks, on the annual dividends of which families maintained themselves.

54. **The National Debt**—The Debt which England has incurred by borrowing from the people ; the interest on this has been paid, but the actual amount or capital has never been paid, with the result that this figure has been rising.

57. **Thread-papers**—Strips of thin, soft paper folded in creases so as to form separate divisions for different skeins of thread.

58—59. **A set of thousands**—A team of usually six horses, costing thousands of pounds.

70. **Mort 'o merry-making**—a great deal of merry-making.  
**High-roomains and low-roomains**—The Bath Assemblies had upper and lower rooms, whose membership was divided and separate. A lot of rivalry seems to have existed at the time between these two groups.

72. **Pump-room**—Though literally the room where the different sickly people met to drink the mineral waters, actually it became a great, or rather, the chief social centre of Bath.

74. **Parade**—The public promenade in Bath.

82. **Polish**—evidently he means that Thomas is not dressed in the latest fashion, and Bath was a fashionable resort !

85. **Ton**—Style.

87—88. **When I heared.....own hair**—By the end of this century, the general practice of wearing wigs was fast vanishing and people now were seen with their natural hair.

89—90. **Bar and Box**—Actually 'bar' means the railings which separate ordinary barristers from King's Counsel ; and hence it has now come to mean the profession of a barrister or a lawyer. Box is the driver's seat on a coach. Hence the idea is that when the fashion has started with the lawyers, it is sure to spread to the coachmen.

91. **Out of character**—not in keeping with one's position—hence improper.

96. **The gentlemen of the professions**—from Thomas's point of view, the people who follow profession similar to his own. Otherwise profession indicates a vocation requiring some education or technical proficiency.

96. **Thoff**—Though.

98. **Farrier**—one who shoes horses.

99. **College**—A group of persons, having certain common rights and privileges and devoted to common pursuits.



111. **Gyde's Porch**—The lower rooms kept by Mr. Gyde :

# ACT I. SCENE II

Not only the books mentioned herein seems to be very fashionable at the time in society, but there is the added importance, in as much as Miss Lydia is reading what seems to be prohibited and appears from the titles almost full of scandals and shocking in morality. It is as a result of such reading that she has come to believe in elopements and falling in love with a poor lover ; and escapes and romantic marriage is now what she craves !

Mr. Bull, Mr. Frederick—Booksellers in Bath.

4—5. **The Reward of Constancy**—There seems to have been no such book. But some editors identify it with "The Happy Pair or Virtue and Constancy Rewarded"—a novel by Mr. Shebbeare, circa 1771.

7. **"The Fatal Connexion"**—A novel by Mr. Fogerty (1773).

9. **The Mistakes of the Heart**--or, "Memoirs of Lady Caroline Pelham and Lady Victoria Nevil"—By Treysac de Vergy (1769).

12. **"The Delicate Distress"**--a novel in letter-form by Mrs. Griffith (1769).

14. **"The memoirs of Lady Woodford"**—Written by herself and addressed to a friend (1771).

26. **The Gordian Knot**—a novel in letter-form by Mrs. Griffith, the husband of the author of the above mentioned "The Delicate Distress."

26—28. **"Peregrine Pickle"** and **"Humphrey Clinker"**—Novels of Tobias Smollett, in 1752 and 1771. Now at least are names of writers who have a permanent position in English literature. Smollett is important as the writer who made the picaresque—or the 'adventure' novel—very fashionable, as against Fielding and Richardson. His other novel is Roderick Random. "Humphrey Clinker"—written in letter form, contains some of his best works, and pictures of life and characters which have made him an important novelist.

27. **Tears of Sensibility**—Translated by Mr. John Murdoch from the French of D'Armand (1773).

28. **"The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality"**—is a part of *Peregrine Pickle*, mentioned above.

30. **"The Sentimental Journey"**—Sterne is the author of two important works, "Tristram Shandy" and "The Sentimental Journey."

The latter is a pretended account of the author's journey through France to Italian border. He has a peculiar sense of humour.

33. **"The Whole Duty of Man"**—(1660), author unknown. But it was extensively advertised, in a new edition, in 1773.

34. **Blonds**—A kind of lace, made originally of raw silk.

35. **Sal volatile**—An aromatic solution of ammonium carbonate. But the maid, Lucy, takes it to be another book-title, and hence wants to know which is the book.

47. **You were denied to me at first**—"I was told that you could not see me!"

60. **A note**—Any letter from Ensign Beverley.

61. **Confined me**—Has refused me the freedom I had, and thus I am in a way imprisoned in the house.

64. **Rout**—A large evening party.

70. **More indulgent**—more tolerant and hence prepared to make greater allowance and give you greater freedom.

78. **Shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop**—will use his influence which he has with Mrs. Malaprop in your favour.

85. **We never had a quarrel**—Lydia is such a strange girl, since her whole life has lacked excitement. And besides, in the books and novels that she has read, she had found that lovers always quarrel. So how could she fall in love unless she has some quarrel.

96. **Three days and a half**—just a small period or half a week. Nothing particular about the figure.

106. **For the alternative**—that is, for the aunt's consent.

111. **Apropos**—As bearing upon this subject, in this connection.

119. **Assuming the right of a husband**—He continues to be imperious as a lover, whereas by now he could have married you and obtained the rights which only his assumption may give.

149. **Obligation**—Should we talk of obligation in love? If it comes to saving a life, a water spaniel would do it. Can we love a dog as we love a man or marry him?

166. **Coz**—a dear term of affection, for cousin.

167. **To send a Faulkland**—to call him through a message.

170. **Hide these books**—the books which may create suspicion in Mrs. Malaprop's mind are all hidden, as they may appear too frivolous and not decent ; while religious books are to be kept within easy view, to make Mrs. Malaprop think her niece a serious type of girl.

172. **"Roderick Random"**—Mentioned above under "Peregrine Pickle."

173. **"The Innocent Adultery"**—L'Adultire Innocente of Paul Scarron, was translated under the above title.

174. **"Lord Aimworth"**—The full title of the book is "The History of Lord Aimworth and the Hono'able Charles Hansford, Esq." in a series of letters (1773.)

175. **"The Man of Feeling"**—a book by Henry Mackenzie (1771), in which the hero is presented in a series of sentimental sketches, as in Addison's Sir Roger de Coverly.

176. **"Mrs. Chapone"**—Letters on the improvement of the mind ; addressed to a young Lady, Mrs. Chapone (1773).

177. **"Fordyce's Sermons"**—The name of the book is "Sermons to a Young Woman" (1765).

181. **Lord Chesterfield's Letters**—Lord Chesterfield, fourth earl of Chesterfield (1693—1773) was a viceroy of Ireland, as well as a wit and an orator, and a patron of learning. The letters were written from 1737, and addressed to his natural son, and are full of sensible instruction and good breeding. It is a valuable literary document.

182. **Deliberate simpleton**—who is foolish after deliberating *i. e.*, intentionally and with full consideration.—Mrs. Malaprop's misuse of words !

186. **I don't know any business**—In our modern English, I do not know what business it is of yours to think.

187. **Thought does not become a young woman**—young girls must do what is proper and from Mrs. Malaprop's point of view, thought is not a proper thing in a woman—perhaps obedience is !

190. **Illiterate**—now we come across those words of Mrs. Malaprop which have made her such a character in English. She means 'obliterate.'



195—196. I am sure ..... never existed—what a matter of boast ! Mrs. Malaprop has forgotten her dead husband so much that she almost has forgotten that she ever was married to him ! Perhaps her new love has made her feel this more !

200. This comes of her reading—Sir Anthony is also an equally obstinate and head-strong person ! He would suppress all reading by girls, for he takes reading to be as dangerous as the black-art or black magic !

203. Extirpate—Malapropism for exculpate, to vindicate oneself from a charge.

204. Proof controvertible—She means “proof uncontrovertible” or un-challengeable evidence.

206. Of your friend's choosing—Chosen for you by a friend.

213. It is safest.....aversion—It is better, as a general policy, to begin marriage with a bit of dislike for a husband.

215. Black-a-moor—a negro, a moor.

217 When it pleased Heaven—Hardly a proper sentiment for a husband dead ! When he died, and heaven released me from the bondage—“but the implication, whether Mrs. Malaprop means it or not, is from a bondage which was not a happy thing for me, and hence the relief was an act of kindness by heaven.”

221. Could I belie—If I could be so false to my thoughts as to promise to do what I do not think, then my action would be equally false to my words.

225. I cannot change for the worse—Being confined to my room is not worse than being in such an unwelcome company as yours.

233. Misanthropy—She means misogynist—a hater of women.

237. Marble cover—covered with paper stained or coloured with lines, to resemble marble.

238. How full of duty—ironically used.

246. Laconically—she means ‘ironically.’ Laconically means “briefly.”

250. Progeny—Prodigy.

253. Simony—The buying or selling of ecclesiastical preferments. That is, if a person wants to become a bishop or an ordinary clergyman he purchases this place from some one who has been holding it. Fluxions—The ‘Newtonian method now

known as the differential calculus.

254. **Inflammatory branches**—Subjects which would inflame or rouse violently the feelings and thoughts of students. These metaphorically would be romantic subjects like poetry or things dealing with love, or those which would create a rebellious tendency in general.

256. **Diabolical**—devilish. She uses the word, thinking that like mathematical and astronomical, it is also a branch of study.

259. **Supercilious**—"Superficial"—not very deep : or is it superfluous ?

261. **Geometry**—She means geography.

262. **Contagious**—*i. e.*, Contiguous, or neighbouring.

263. **Orthodoxy**—Orthography,—that branch of grammar which deals with letters and spellings.

264. **That she might not mis-spell**—The joke is that Mrs. Malaprop is condemning girls for a fault which is most patent or clear in herself, but of which she is blissfully ignorant.

266. **Reprehend**—she means 'comprehend' or 'understand.'

268. **Superstitious**—she means 'Superfluous.'

270. **Dispute the point**—Argue this topic.

274. **You have no objection to my proposal**—you have no objection to the proposal I make for my son's marriage to Lydia.

283. **Hope no objection**—I hope he will not raise any objection to this proposal from his side. The parents may wish for a union which neither of the party concerned may approve.

286. **My process**—My method of bringing up my child was a simple direct method, of ordering a thing to be done without caring to know about Jack's likes or dislikes.

289. **Sent him out of the room**—In disgrace.

291. **Conciliating**—Capable of winning over or gaining over. How this is so, Mrs. Malaprop alone knows ?

293. **His discharge**—Take him out of this list of prospective suitors, suitable for Lydia, and enter the name of Jack Absolute.

294. **Invocations**—"Protestation," or rather, "expression of love." We invoke gods and goddesses.

295. **Illegible**—she means ineligible *i. e.*, quite a suitable match for Jack.

298. **Enforce the matter roundly to the girl**—That is, not to permit the girl to express herself or allow her choice but force it with a strong hand, like what he has been treating Jack in childhood. He makes his ideas clearer in the next few words.

304. **Intuition**—She means “intention.”

316. **O Gemini**—a mild form of oath.

323. **You forfeit my malevolence for ever**—You lose my ‘benevolence’ or kindness which I have shown you so far.

325. **Locality**—She means ‘loquacity’—or ‘talkativeness.’

326. **My dear simplicity**—Lucy addresses herself as simplicity. Since she has been so called and now wants to drop this pose and be what she really is.

329. **Commend me to a mask of silliness**—so far as I am concerned, give me my choice of silliness as a pretence and a sharp eye to take advantage of whatever the situation affords.

337. **About a quarter’s pay**—An amount equal to 3 month’s wages. Wages were sometimes fixed by the year or the quarter.  
**Item**—We use this word as a noun, whereas the actual meaning of this Latin word is adverbial, which means “In like manner” or ‘likewise’ or ‘also.’

399. **Padusoy**—A kind of a garment, made from a silk stuff, very popular in the eighteenth century; a type of strong corded silk-fabric.

342. **Pocket-pieces**—Coins carried in one’s own pocket, as a charm.

344. **Hibernian**—Hibernia was the Latin name for Ireland. Hence Irishman or woman.

345—348. **Though not over rich.....his fortunes**—Though he was poor, yet he was a proud man who would not sacrifice his feelings of pride and delicacy and marry any woman, because of his own absence of fortune.

## ACT II. SCENE I

7. **Interjectural**—as an interjection or exclamation. Our modern form is ‘interjectory.’

13. **To fix what has brought us to Bath**—The servant does not know definitely why the master has come to Bath, and every time he is required to tell lies. He may, however, be found out some time, when the lie which he tells, does not agree with the lie his master may be spreading. So he wants both of them



to decide upon the common lie which they should stick to, in order not to be contradictory.

15. **Curious**—In the sense of “inquisitive” *i. e.*, “full of curiosity.”

25. **Is come to Bath to recruit**—Recruitment of men for the army was going on at places. We find similar talk of recruiting in Falstaff’s picture in Henry IV. But here, Fag is clever in leaving all vague as to what he is to recruit, for it is something which one is lacking. Hence it could be one of the three mentioned.

29. **Will do surprisingly**—Would serve the purpose in a most apt and proper manner, and hence is the lie which they both should consistently mention.

31. **Chairmen**—Servants engaged to carry a sedan chair.

32. **Minority waiters**—The meaning is not clear. “Probably waiters out of work” (Adams). **Billiard markers**—People engaged to note down the score at the game of Billiards.

35. **Unless one supports**—A lie will not appear to be truth unless one keeps it up with further lies, so that it has the appearance of truth and consistency.

36. **“Draw on” and indorsements**—When one draws a cheque on a bank, it requires proper endorsement or proof of signature. So when I invent some lie, I try to support it with a proof.

37. **Bill**—Cheque.

38. **Take care etc.**—If you offer too much security, it creates a suspicion in the mind of a person who gives you a loan that his money is not safe. Banks offering too high a rate of interest are at once suspected, and people prepared to offer a high rate of interest for loan or money they borrow, create the suspicion the money given is not safe.

48. **Do me the favour to remember**—Be good enough to remember the lie which we have decided upon—that you are here to recruit.

51. **In tenderness to my character**—Out of consideration for my character, I would be grateful if you mention the further lies also as I have mentioned, for otherwise I would be proved a liar!

52. **Bring in**—to mention casually in your talk.

70. **I could have brought her to that**—I could have easily prevailed upon her to this course of action.

73. **In your own character**—As Captain Absolute and not as Ensign Beverley.

77. **Take me with the impediment**—Hindrances and obstructions. Some property comes not with clear money, but with conditions which make it not quite a welcome gift. These are impediments. Lydia may accept him in the romantic spirit as Ensign Beverley, but she may not be prepared to accept him as Captain Absolute, marrying her with all the formality of consent of guardians and the consequent thirty thousand pounds coming to her after marriage.

79. **Reversion**—the amount payable upon an event like death, or any other condition mentioned.

91. **Farrago**—a confused mixture or a medley.

92. **Country miss's brain**—Ideas which a girl brought up in the country or village, holds—hence foolish, unworthy of an educated person of town.

94—95. **You throw for a large stake**—The idea is taken from gambling when to get a large amount, one puts quite a decent sum at stake. If one loses, one may continue to stake again, so that later on, one may win. In other words, you are staking for a large aim than the mere love of Lydia, and if you do not succeed, you would try else-where. Not so with me, who have put all my feelings upon one beloved and if I lose, I lose everything in this gamble.

102. **Are there not a thousand**—Faulkland is an extremely suspicious, jealous type of an individual who requires no special cause for doubting the constancy of his beloved. If his beloved loves him ardently, it is too immodest in a woman. If she is more restrained, she is cool and indifferent. If she is neither too ardent, nor too restrained, then he would say that she lacks the warmth of true love!

110. **O, Jack, when delicate and feeling souls**—These lines remind one, of the first scene of the "Merchant of Venice," when Salarino and Solanio speak almost in the same manner. Only, here it is love which makes a person anxious and worried, and in the case of Antonio, it is the uncertainty of the journeys over the sea.

142. **Of my other self's**—*i. e.*, of Captain Absolute.

150. **Sir, Your humble servant**—Bowling towards Faulk-

land, whom he does not know, and hence this formal courtesy.

152. **A comet, with a tail of dust**—A comet, when it appears, is followed by a long tail of luminous appearance. Here, he has been moving so fast in the carriage, that there is a trail of dust left on the road.

154. **Eccentric planet**—a planet which does not move along a fixed normal path. Here the word 'eccentric' is punned upon, the other meaning being, 'whimsical,' or 'odd.'

155. **Your attraction**—A planet moves away from the fixed path because of some additional sudden attraction or gravitation. Mr. Acres has been made to leave his regular path of movement by the attraction of Lydia !

159. **I solicit your connections**—I crave your friendship.

162. **Can be but just arrived**—must have arrived almost immediately.

168. **Od's blushes and blooms**—But Acres is full of strange oaths of this type.

169. **The German Spa**—A town in Belgium, where there is a spring of mineral waters ; a health-resort. It was at its height of fame in the eighteenth century.

185. **Good apartments**—referring to the rooms which Jack Absolute has engaged for himself.

194. **Innate levity**—an inborn tendency towards frivolity. Levity does not mean looseness of conduct here.

202. **I acquit you**—of the charge (as if that is a crime !) of having been an enjoyable companion.

214. **Flat, sharp, squallante, rumblante and quiverante**—All musical terms. *Flat* means below the true pitch : *Sharp*, above the true pitch. The others are burlesque Italian musical terms.

220. **Is not music the food of love**—"If music be the food of love. Play on :"—Opening lines of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night.

226. **Purling stream airs**—Tunes resembling a soft bubbling murmuring sound, as a quiet movement in stream.

230. **Go, gentle gales**—The refrain of the song "the faithful lover" in Clio and Euterpe or the British Harmony, (1762) vol. iii, p. i. Jack Absolute tries to suggest by these songs that the lady was singing about her loneliness, when her lover is absent. If Bob Acres had caught the hint, he would have said



‘yes,’ to these suggestions.

232. **“My heart’s my own—**Bob Acres will not take the hint, but mentions a song whose words are bound to disturb Faulkland still more. This one is a song from Issac Burkerstaffe’s *Love in a Village*.” I. I

237. **Catches and glees—**A catch is a light tune or a light song. A glee has been explained in Dictionaries as “a composition for several voices in harmony consisting usually of two or more contrasted movements and without instrumental accompaniment.” Can it not mean simply joy or mirth, as is usually meant.

244. **Temperately healthy and plaintively gay—**His ridiculous nature is shown more clearly in these words. How can a man have *temperate* health? He can either be healthy, or unhealthy but cannot be a mixture of both. So also “sadly joyful”

251. **Race-ball—**A ball or a dance held in connection with race-meetings.

259. **Don’t expose yourself so—i. e., to ridicule.** For such a behaviour would at once make him an object of ridicule or derisive laughter.

262. **I’ll contain myself—**control my feelings and not expose them.

264. **Minuet—**A slow stately dance in triple measure.

266. **Country dancing—**A form of combined dancing, in which the partners are ranged in lines opposite to each other.

270. **Jigs and reels—**‘Jig’ is a lively dance while ‘reel’ is a vigorous and spirited Scottish dance, when the couples face each other and describe figure of 8.

273. **Cotillon—**a form of dance performed by four or eight persons.

274. **Monkey-led—**As a monkey is led by a master, so to be taken by the hand by one’s partner.

275. **Amorous palming puppies—**To have one’s hand caught by the palm of young fools who must be feeling a bit of love.

276. **To show paces like filly—**‘A filly’ is a female foal or young horse. Before a horse is purchased, he is made to show, how he can run, canter etc., before the prospective purchaser. This is called ‘showing paces.’

284. **The action of their pulse beats to**—Their feelings are aroused according to the immortal and suggestive movements of the dance, and everybody becomes full of the feeling of love, which spreads like a contagion.

290. **Looby**—The modern equivalent is “Booby”—a young fool.

295. **Now nothing on earth**—Faulkland is so inconsistent that only a few lines afterwards, when he gets a confirmation from Fag's reports, he at once sinks into dejection.

306. **Lydia has forestalled me**—It should be remembered that he is under the impression that Lydia loves him, thanks to the mischief of Lucy, who has been carrying his letters and giving them to Mrs. Malaprop but pretending that Lydia was the person whom she was giving them.

307. **She could never abide me in the country**—‘could not tolerate my continuation of stay in the country or away from town.’

309. **Frogs and tambours**—‘A frog’ was a spindle-shaped button used for fastening military cloaks and undress coats, and ladies mantles. Tambours are embroidered silk stuff.

310. **Ancient Madam**—Does he mean ‘old fashioned?’ Or does he refer to some old woman relative like a mother, under whose guidance, he has been dressing while in the country?

313. **My hair has been in training**—He has been trying to shape or curl the hair as may be the fashion. The side-curls are not yet properly adjusted, though the portion behind is now as the hair ought to be.

321. **Spoke like a man**—*i e*, like a brave person.

329. **Jove**—Jupiter, the chief of the Roman gods.

330. **Bacchus**—The Greek god of festivity and drinking. **Mars**—The Roman god of war. **Venus**—The Roman goddess of love. **Pallas**—Pallas Athena, or Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and arts and trades.

332. **An oath should be an echo to the sense**—An idea misquoted from Pope's ‘Essay on Criticism.’ ‘The sound must seem an echo to the sense.’

338. **Damns have had their day**—‘Damns’ as a form of oath is no longer of use as oath. It has become obsolete.

352. **Parental lecture**—Sir Anthony is certainly fond of

lecturing to his son without permitting him any chance to give reason.

354. **The gout had held him fast**—*i. e.*, had made it impossible for him to move from Devonshire. Gout is a painful disease of joints.

356. **Apprehensive**—Your health must have taken a turn for the worse, to have forced you to come immediately to Bath.

373. **Income of your commission**—You pay as a commissioned officer.

377. **Make some figure in the world**—Make a mark for himself.

380—81. **Such generosity.....filial affection**—Such kindness shown makes gratefulness more pleasurable as a sensation than even the feeling of affection for the father. That adds to the filial affection.

397. **The fortune is saddled with a wife**—The property comes to you only along with a condition that you take the owner of it as your wife. Hence it is 'saddled'—not free, but encumbered.

404. **What's difference does that make**—"Does the addition of a wife charge your fortune for the worse, and take away your freedom?"

405—406. **Estate.....live stock**—Where a property devolves upon us, it comes along with the dead stock and live stock, furniture as well as animals. 'Live stock' used here for 'human beings' also.

410. **What's that to you**—"How are you concerned with who the lady is, so long as you get the property in marriage."

417. **My inclinations are fixed on another**—My affection or love is centred on some other lady.

419. **Send an excuse**—This is the usual method. When you do not want to attend an engagement, you send an excuse, stating that "business prevents you from attending a function which would have given you great pleasure" etc.

422. **Foreclose, pledged, redeeming**—Terms from legal profession. When a property is mortgaged, it can be redeemed or freed from mortgage on payment of the amount for which it is mortgaged. If the mortgage is not redeemed in proper time, by payment of money due, it is foreclosed. So the vows which you made, like a worthless property mortgaged, are not worth



redeeming. and can be allowed to be foreclosed Beside, the loss here is not great, for the vows which you, as a man, have pledged, you have the vows of *an angel*, which shows the balance still in your favour !

446. **The Bull in Cox's museum**—Mr. Cox of London, exhibited a 'curious bull' which was a mechanical curiosity in Bath in 1773-74. Mr. Cox was a Jeweller.

448. **Ogle her all day**—To cast amorous glances towards a lady.

459. **None of your passion**—While poor Jack is more cool even under such an excitement, he is blamed for being under a 'passion' or anger, by a man who is himself most excited, but claims to be calm !

467. **So you will fly out**—*i. e.*, get out of control and temper !

469. **Passion is of no service**—This is from a person who himself is most "impassioned" ! Think of the heaped-up abuses and taunts !

478. **Do not enter the same hemisphere with me**—Move in the other hemisphere'—Let us be parted so widely, otherwise we may come in conflict.

480. **Strip of your commission**—Get your commissioned rank as a Military Officer taken away from you.

481. **Five and three pence**—Leave such an utterly insignificant amount for your future maintenance. Wealthy people left money in the hands of trustees on the interest of which amount, the children could continue to live.

483. **Unget you**—Deprive of your rights as my son, since I have got or produced you.

490. **A bold intriguer**—Intriguer in matter of love. 'Intriguer as Jack himself is'—nothing criminal.

493. **Eight or ten steps at a time**—This is Fag's own exaggeration A man out of temper or out of mood may come down hurriedly, but if he comes down like this, it merely shows he has fallen down the stairs !

497. **Bids me carry that to my master**—Just as we bid a servant carry our compliments to his master !

498. **Turnspit**—A large variety of dog, employed formerly to turn spits.

499. **A puppy triumvirate**—Three puppies *i. e.*, yourself, myself and the dog, all are puppies !

502. **Cease your impertinence**—Jack is hardly in a mood to listen to such an advice from a servant, though a faithful one. But the ill-temper of Sir Absolute is catching, and it spreads but downwards !

504. **Trims my master**—reproves or scolds Jack.

505. **Vents his spleen**—Spleen, used figuratively means ill-temper, “gives an expression to his ill-temper.”

508. **It shows the worst temper**—And the joke is that he himself does what he complains about in Jack. Refer to his behaviour towards the errand-boy.

## ACT II. SCENE II

3. **Till my purse has received notice in form**—Till I have been properly and well-tipped. The form of the notice has to be money not mere letter to be passed on.

4 **Acres is dismissed**—He has now no chance of success with Lydia as Ensign Beverley has preceded him in her love.

8. **A little scruple of conscience**—A bit of hesitation from motives of conscience. Even *her* conscience, which is quite easy, tells her that this deception is hardly proper.

1 . **My hero**—Sir Lucius O'Trigger, who is the hero for the supposed 'Delia.' 'My' does not mean 'her own.'

11. **Her own mistress**—She is not under the control of any person, as Lydia is under that of Mrs. Malaprop.

34. **Inductions**—Introduction, or beginning.

36. **Superfluous**—'Superficial' (Mrs. Malaprop's letter, and hence these malapropisms.

37. **Punctuation**—'Punctiliousness' or etiquette.

38. **Infallible**—'ineffable' or unspeakable or inexpressible.

39. **Criterion**—'The centre' or 'the cynosure.'

40. **Meretricious**—The actual meaning is “tempting by false show.” But she means, “unworthy”—as a mark of politeness.

(Sir Lucius is no scholar and these strange words merely puzzle his addled brain.)

43. **For the devil a word dare refuse**—No word dare refuse to come for serving her purpose of expression. She is such a great mistress of language.

45. **Her experience**—A girl of seventeen can hardly have much experience of the world, when women lived a retired life, till they were introduced to society ; evidently a slip, which Lucy soon corrects.

50. **Arbitrary**—Even Sir O'Trigger has seen that the words are used arbitrarily, or capriciously, irregularly.

52. **Habeas Corpus**—A writ or summons to produce a prisoner before the court, requiring mention of details, like the cause of his arrest, so that justice may be done. Naturally persons who are illegally detained, secure such an habeas corpus ; here words have been illegally forced into service, and could claim freedom !

57. **Lady O'Trigger into the bargain**—She will be able to secure a rank and a position or status as the wife of a knight.

61. **You wa'n't rich enough to be so nice**—A rich person would care for the wealth from his partner. But a poor man would be prepared to marry for love and not for money ! "nice" means 'fastidious.'

69. **Before-hand**—as a sort of advance payment !

70. **I never seed such a gentleman**—I never saw such a gentleman.

74. **More praised by the women than liked**—women praise as a virtue, but would not like to have it. On the contrary, the more bold and almost immodest a man is towards them, the better they would like it.

77. **Would you have me tell her a lie**—Lucy's boldness is certainly immodest !

81. **I will quiver your conscience**—I will give you the kisses so that your conscience need not prick you : for then it won't be a lie.

85. **So little less simplicity**—She was taken to be simplicity by Mrs. Malaprop. So "less of your pretended simplicity of conduct or nature and a bit more a sincerity."

87. **I saw you give the baronet a letter**—He has seen nothing but pretends as if he caught her doing something wrong. Lucy laughs, as she finds that what she was afraid of—*i. e.*, of being seen when Sir Lucius was kissing her, is not known to Fag, and hence she is a lot comforted.

91. **Address**—Behaviour and conduct in conversation.



93. **Why, I suppose**—Fag is conceited enough to think that he has better address, but Mrs Malaprop has no taste, since she prefers the behaviour of Sir 'OTrigger.

### ACT III. SCENE I

4. **My connexion**—My relation to her as her lover. We use the word 'connection' with rather a bad significance.

7. **My conversion**—Change from not wanting to obey Sir Absolute only a short time back to this sudden preparedness to marry whomsoever he wants would appear rather extraordinary.

9. **Plaguy gruff**—annoyingly or disturbingly sour or rough.

11. **Die.....I will live**—Dying would not trouble the boy, as all his father's property immediately comes to the son. But if the old man lives for a long time, the longer he lives, the longer is the postponement of the property coming to the son.

14. **Who can he take after**—From whom has he inherited this tendency? Sir Anthony blissfully imagines that *he* is a very mild, sensible, reasonable man *himself*!

15. **Getting him before**—For producing him as the eldest son!

19. **He is any body's son for me**—I am now as indifferent to him as if he is any person's son and not mine, and hence I shall have no interest in the boy.

21. **A penitential face**—A repentent appearance of face.

48. **The Languishes of Worcestershire**—Pretends as if he has not known the lady, and wants to know as if it is the Languish family of Worcestershire. He pretends further by giving a most absurd picture.

70. **Tell-tale eyes**—eyes which betray the feelings inside.

76. **And which is to be mine**—This is the height of pretence. He pretends that he will marry any lady, old or young, niece or aunt, no matter whether she is ugly or good, but he will do as his father wants, out of a spirit of repentance and obedience!

83. **Not to please your father**—Jack cleverly suggests something which Sir Anthony, in his zest, does not understand, for he had been telling his son to be obedient!

101. **I would not like to affect a singularity**—Since it is supposed to be the common prejudice that people must have two

eyes. I do not want to be different from others.

103. **Stock**—A block of wood—that is, you are a dead thing, since you do not seem to have any emotions or feelings, stirred in you by such a picture of beauty. ‘An anchorite’ is a hermit.

105. **Regimentals**—military uniform.

110. ‘Tis the same to me—I am entirely indifferent as to choice.

124. **Promethean Torch**—Prometheus was one of the giants or Titans who stole fire from the heavens for the benefit of man. For this action, he was tied to a rock by Jove or Zeus, and his heart was eaten by an eagle, which however was restored in the night and thus punishment was a perpetual torture.

### ACT III. SCENE II

3. **How mean does this captious**—Faulkland is conscious of the fact that his unwarranted suspicious nature is conscious but he cannot check it.

13. **Expostulations**—He has come to scold her, upbraid her for her indifference, in as much as she has been so *excessively* happy in *his* absence, while he has been so *miserable* in *hers* !

24. **Salutation**—Kisses, unless it may be taken to mean mere courteous enquiry.

37. **The mutual tear**—Till they meet again—the tears shed jointly by the lover and the beloved at the time of parting is a sort of agreement sealed by both of them, that they will not be happy while they are absent from each other.

40. **Must I never cease to tax**—Must I always censure or charge you for this whimsical attitude ? Cannot you be ever cured of this ?

48. **If I wear a countenance of content**—If I appear contented, or show no signs of dissatisfaction, it is because I want to show that I am fully satisfied regarding the constancy of my Faulkland’s being true to me. If I appeared sad, it was to make the malicious people feel a bit of happiness, in their malicious belief that I had loved a person who had left me to rove about, and who would therefore be happy at my foolish belief or trust (as they thought) in the constancy of my Faulkland.

59. **Veering but a point**—Changing in the constancy even to a small extent—a phrase taken from mariners.

60. **May I become the proverbial scoff**—May my name be made into a short of proverb to indicate looseness of conduct (inconstancy) and ungratefulness.

62. **Grating**—Painful or harsh to the ear. He does not want her to love out of gratitude for having saved her life, but out of a sincere feeling of true love.

68. **Were to esteem me**—To value me. But love does not court in such terms. It must be spontaneous and without such ideas as gratitude, value, financial position, status etc.

72. **Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention**—When nature has gifted a man with fine and beautiful features, he should despise these—for beauty of physical form is not the true worth of man.

74. **In this vain article**—‘In this matter, which is an object of vanity’—i. e., beauty makes a man vain.

78. **I despise person in a man**—I do not care for the physical or personal appearance, as of any value in man.

87. **Which else had made worthier choice**—Which inclinations, if they had not been bound by your father, would have been free to choose perhaps a more worthy person than I am.

88—90. **How shall I be sure...your persevering love**—What assurance can I have, or how shall it be proved to me, that if you had been free and not tied down by your father's contract, that you would have chosen me without hesitation—in which case alone his worth would be proved, for she would have married him, then, for his own qualities, not for some superficial reason.

104. **I would not boast**—when I say that I possess qualities like my age, personality, and character which would create a liking or love for me, I am not boasting. I have fortune, or wealth and property which is such that if ladies love me for it, they could hardly be charged for having been indiscreet or foolish.

108. **When Love receives such countenance**—when love is supported by such an evidence of such factors as wealth, property, personality etc. as additional charms, its birth as love is likely to be questioned, for it is not love which ought to be spontaneous, but it is prudence which makes a woman love a



man like me. People would suspect the sincerity of love in case like this, and attribute my feeling to prudence, or worldlywise or circumspect, cautious behaviour.

### ACT III. SCENE III.

2. **A sufficient accommodation**—Mrs. Malaprop's word for 'recommendation.'

13. **The Ineffectual qualities**—ineffable.

18. **They think**—Women themselves value our admiration of their beauty so much that they think it superfluous to add knowledge as an additional charm or attraction in them.

21. **Of the more specious blossom**—when beauty, which they have in a large measure, is gone, then these ladies, like the garden-trees, show the fruits, or knowledge.

24. **Good-breeding**—She means 'courtesy.'

25. **Pine-apple of politeness**—She means the paragon of politeness or the non-pareil of politeness.

34. **Since I exploded the affair**—perhaps 'since I exposed the case.'

35. **My positive conjunction**—my definite 'injunction'—or order.

36. **Preposition**—She means 'proposition' or rather proposal.

38. **Particle**—She means 'article.'

40. **It gives me the hydrostatics**—I think she means 'hysterics.'

41. **Persisted from corresponding**—"Desisted" or stopped from corresponding.

42. **Interceded**—"Interpreted" or stopped or seized and kept off from being passed on.

55. **Profane**—Does this mean 'profuse'?

76. **An aspersion upon my parts of speech**—an aspersion or attack or a bad remark upon the parts of speech or language I use.

77. **Sure if I reprehend anything**—"comprehend" or understand.

78. **Oracular tongue**—"Oral tongue."

79. **Nice derangment of epitaphs**—"arrangement" of 'epithets' or proper adjectives.

80. **Hanged and quartered**—‘Hanged, drawn and quartered’—A form of punishment in medieval times, when after a traitor was hanged, his body was pulled in different directions, and cut into four pieces.

93. **Laid by the heels**—to arrest or imprison.

101. **Better perpetrated**—‘portrayed’ or ‘planned.’

104. **I doubt**—The old form of expression, meaning ‘I am afraid’ or ‘I suspect that.’

107. **Only tell her Beverley**—His tongue has almost betrayed him, but he just manages to escape detection by cleverly tiding over the slip.

118. **He’ll make me a go-between**—Even when she is laughing at the impudence of Ensign Beverly, she is actually playing the very part. Thus, the laughter is not against Beverley, but against Mrs. Malaprop, and she is unconscious of it!

129. **For the present, captain, your servant**—A from of courtesy before going out of the room to call Lydia.

160. **Over-reached**.—‘Cheated.’

164. **Rescue her from undeserved persecution**—Lydia would like to feel that she is persecuted and hence, an elopement would add to the thrill.

165. **With a licensed warmth, plead for my reward**—due to him for having rescued her. ‘Licensed warmth’—with an emotion or feeling which is permissible, since he has done so much for her.

167. **That burden on the wings of love**—That hindrance to the free flight of love; unhindered.

186. **Antipodes**—The portion of the earth opposite diametrically, where we are living.

191. **Warmth abated!**—Takes the words exactly in the opposite sense—of her having been in a temper or anger and now more calm and quiet.

195. **She will be in a passion all her life**—This is Malapropism for the idea ‘she will be in an anger the whole of her life and would never change or soften.’

199. **Very Dutiful**—What a sense of duty or respect she has towards her aunt whom she calls ridiculous. Mrs. Malaprop has now been able to understand what both of them think of her—well, not exactly understand, but at least to know!

202. Assurance—almost in the sense of impudence, since she boasts that she would love Beverley, and says it in the presence of his rival, Capt. Absolute—thus, as Mrs. Malaprop sees it !

215. As an allegory—as an ‘alligator,’ a type of crocodile.

232. It does not hurt *me*—That is true ; but Mrs. Malaprop takes it to be sign of his magnanimity that Capt. Absolute is so generous, even when his rival is mentioned in honourable terms.

### ACT III. SCENE IV

1. Do you think I become it so—In other words, does this new dress become or suit me ?

4. Monkeyrony—David's mistaken pronounciation of the word “Maccaroni”—an exquisite fop or a dandy. Printshops—a shop or an establishment for printing on cotton fabrics.

7. Cold-Hall—The family-mansion of Acres.

9. ‘Lord preserve me’—“Lord serve me.”

12. Like my waistcoat—It was a common custom to use coloured waist-coats, in high contrast to other parts of the dress. This perhaps was more common in the dress of servants.

13. The dog in the house but would bark—your own dogs would not recognise you, and, bark at you, as at a stranger.

15. Polishing—in the sense of refined appearance in dress etc. But David applies it to books being polished.

16. But the boy—the underservant who does such work as polishing shoes.

18. De-la-Grace—The very name is symbolical of what the man is.

19. Balancing and chasing, and boring—These are words from dancing.

24. If I had not been at the cooking—Metaphorically spoken. ‘If I had not been present when this appearance was given to you and your head was dressed in this manner, I would not have known you or recognise you myself.’

26. Sink, slide-coupee—cotillions—All phrases taken from dancing.

27. As bad as algebra—shows the complete ignorance of country-gentlemen.

35. English legs—which cannot be adjusted to non-English



steps of dances which are non-English !

36. **Pas**—French for step.

38. **Paws**—The pronunciation of the French 'Pas' is 'pa,' and hence the puzzle to Mr. Acres.

39. **Antigallican**—Anti-French.

46. **Jack a-Lantern**, and find myself in a quagmire at last—Jack-o'-lantern, ignis fatuus, a flame, probably due to inflammable gas coming out of marshy places. Hence a delusive object. Here, it means that he followed a false vision of love which has proved to be an awkward situation, since he came to win a lady, of which he was almost certain, and now finds that he has a competitor in Ensign Beverley who is serious rival.

54. **Otherwise disposed of**—'To be married to a different person.'

67. **We wear no swords here**—In fighting duels, weapons, either swords, or pistols, were used. But when they are talking, they are not armed, as rule regarding duelling in Bath were very strict. People were not allowed to wear swords in public.

73. **Provocation**—no serious cause. He has not provoked me, either by insult, or defamation etc. People fought duels for such reasons, as also when their honour was involved.

76. **Breach of friendship**—Almost used with the legal emphasis as, 'Breach of trust,' 'Breach of faith,' 'Breach of contract,' which are causes of legal action.

83. **I find a man may have.....in him**—"A man may be a very brave person, but may not know his own bravery, till a suitable occasion makes it clear to him."

84. **Right of my side**—right or just for me to fight against a man whom I have not even seen.

86. **What the devil.....concerned**—Sir Lucius is trying to goad or spur him on. He tells Bob Acres that when it is a question in which one's honour is concerned, whether one is right or wrong in challenging or fighting a duel is of no significance.

87. **Achilles**—The son of Priam and Thetis, was the bravest of the Greeks in the Trojan war, and was supposed to be invulnerable in the body, excepting in the heel.

90. **Lazy sons of peace**—as contrasted with the active sons of war *i. e.*, the soldiers.

91. **A grenadier's march**—with the force and power with

which company of grenadiers marches, accompanied by martial music.

94. **Flints, pans and triggers**—*Flints* were used for lighting fire-locks. *Pans* were the part of the rock which contained the priming or the power for firing. *Trigger* is used as a hammer for firing the match-lock etc. Bob Acres swears by these to indicate that he is feeling courageous himself!

96. **Blunderbuss-Hall**—Perhaps the family residence of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, which must contain a room, full of the ancient weapons used in wars by the ancestors of O'Trigger.

98. **New room**—The Assembly-rooms in Bath were opened in 1711.

99—102. **For though as.....as fresh ever**—Sir Lucius speaks contemptuously of the mansion-house and the lands—(dirty acres, in the sense of worthlessness, or extravagance or such things but he is proud to have preserved what he thinks most important. The pictures of his ancestors are kept and preserved, as the most precious possession. Compare, Charles Surface in the same author's "The School for Scandal" where Charles, in need, sells these pictures for what they can fetch to pay pressing debts.

105. **Balls and Barrels**—of gun-powder. Balls used for firing. **Braced**—filled with determination, firmness.

106. **Soured the milk**—What a strange way of stating that all the kindness that he has in his heart, became turned in hardness, stiffness, as of a fighter, who knows no kindness!—The phrase of milk of human kindness is taken from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act I. Sc. v. line 8, where Lady Macbeth speaks after her husband's nature:

"It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way."

108. **'I could do such deeds'**—No special significance in the quotation, for it is too common a phrase. But is it likely to be a misquotation of *King Lear*; "I will do such things" (II. iv. 283).

111. **I must be in a passion**—for, the more angry he is, the more threatening his letter is likely to be. But he does not know how to address a challenge. Hence 'Indite' or 'dictate to me.' We spell the word "indite" as indict though pronounce it as 'indite.'

116. **I will write.....a bold hand**—As if, a bold or big handwriting can indicate the courage of the writer ! Bob is really a vain, foolish person.

125. **From our both addressing the same lady**—"From both of us paying our addresses or making love to or courting the same lady."

132. **Prentions**—This is the old sense to pretend—to lay claims to, or assert a right to. Our modern meaning makes it "false claims."

137. **My own crest**—The family seal or coat of arms of Acres.

138. **This little explanation**—Sir Lucius makes it appear to be a very minor matter—just fight a duel, kill or wound your opponent and you are for ever safe from the fellow's competition. It may be remembered that young Sheridan had himself fought a duel for the lady, who later on became Mrs. Sheridan.

144. **Let the worst come of it**—Does Bob Acres understand that it means even if the worst happens so far as he is concerned *i. e.*, if you get killed ?

152. **At the expense of my country**—The Irishman were often the subject of ridicule or laughter and Ireland mentioned as a poor beggarly country. Sheridan was himself an Irishman.

#### ACT IV. SCENE I

3. **When I wasn't so minded**—When I had not such an inclination or desire, not even Sir Lucius would make me fight.

4. **The Old Lady**—Bob's mother.

9. **Cormorant**—Used figuratively for a 'glutton.' But David uses the word with no understanding of the meaning.

10. **Quarter-staff, short-staff**—*Quarter-staff* was an iron-shod pole, about 6 ft. long, used as a weapon of offence or defence ; *Short-staff* was...

11. **Cry off**—To withdraw from a bargain or a challenge.

16. **And I think in return**—"If I care so much for my honour as not to risk it or lose it, let honour care for me so much as not to put my life in danger."

23. **Put the case**—"Let us put or place the case thus."

30. **My honour whips over to my enemy**—The honour which



should have come to me, because of my defeat, goes over to my enemy !

33. **That's just the place**—I can manage to do without honour in my grave, because once a man is dead, it is immaterial whether he gets an honour or not.

40. **As long as you can out of their company**—Not to join them so early as this, by dying prematurely.

45. **A visiting acquaintance**—An acquaintance which is expressed by being on terms of visit by you to them, and they to you.

49. **Ten to one against you**—A phrase from betting or gambling. Ten chances against your winning, as compared to one chance of your success.

50. **'Oons !**—In oath, perhaps 'God's wounds' !

51. **Double barrellled swords and cut-and-thrust pistols**—Perhaps David is such an arrant coward that even the talk of duels and fights has confused his speech. He means 'Double-barrelled pistols' and 'cut-and-thrust swords.' But had ever pistols had double-barrels ? Perhaps 'pistols' stand for a gun.

53. **Bloody-minded weapons**—'Bloody in purpose or effect.'

55. **I suppose there an't...loaded pistol**—this is almost reminiscent of Bottom's remark in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when he says, "For there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living ; and we ought to look to 't." III. i. 34-35. In the same manner, David speaks of the pistol as a 'beast' when he ought to say 'weapon.'

64. **For the best horse in your stable**—"Even for the gift of the best horse" etc.

68. **Wouldn't swear it mayn't go off**—"I almost may swear that it may go off or explode."

72. **Clod-Hall**—The residence of Bob Acres. From now, David paints a picture of how the news of the death of Bob will be believed at Clod-Hall.

73. **Ay, poor bitch...going after**—Dogs used to follow their master while on a shooting, and fetch the birds and animals killed. But now, she would not know that he is going for *being shot* !

89. **St. George and the Dragon**—St. George killing the Dragon is the national emblem of England. St. George is

the patron-saint of England, from the time of Edward III ; hence, perhaps he is also regarded as the patron of the Order of the Garter.

99. Wrought me to it—'Worked me up to the pitch to fight.'

111. My second—A person accompanying the main fighter in a duel.

112. Not in this affair—Because he himself is the principal or chief participant and hence cannot be a second !

The few sentences spoken now by Bob show how nervous he is and anxious to get out of the fight.

#### ACT IV. SCENE II

6. No caparisons—'No comparisons.' (Mrs. Malaprop's words !)

11. Adulation—Does she mean 'education' ? For 'adulation' would hardly be a qualification.

12. His physiognomy—"His philology" or language.

14. What Hamlet says—Refer to *Hamlet*, III. iv. 56-59.  
 "Hyperion curls, the front of love himself,  
 An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,  
 A station like the herald Mercury  
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill."

Hamlet is scolding his mother for having fallen in love with his uncle, who was nothing in comparison to his late father. But Mrs. Malaprop misquotes and misuses and mispronounces !

31. Come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty—Lydia has, from the point of view of Sir Anthony, as yet not relented. or abated in her aversion to Jack, and frowns with disfavour at his candidature for her hand.

36. I am ashamed for the cause—"For the cause of this trouble *i. e.*, for the girl who is the cause of this trouble.'

52. My affluence over niece—"My influence.'

54. May I not flatter myself—A polite expression to indicate that he would like to be honoured with an explanation as to why she dislikes marriage to his son.'

77. Unlock your jaws—"Open your mouth.'

83. Not croaking iikc a frog in a quinsy—The pretense

which Jack makes, looks to Sir Anthony as if he is nervous, and thus the father takes it that his son is too chicken-hearted in the cause of pleading his love.

90. **A side-front**—The side-appearance or a profile, as she is sitting with her face turned away from. This is extremely discourteous and rude, and Sir Anthony would like the girl at least to turn her face towards them.

102. **Runs so on**—Is absorbed in thinking of Beverley.

115. **Bedlam**—The Bethlehem Hospital in London, founded as a royal foundation or institution or for lunatics from 1547. Hence, a madman.

124. **Ye powers of impudence befriends me**—May impudence itself give me the power to get over this difficulty, by coming to my assistance.

126. **That I sincerely believe**—My duty or respect towards you must have shown you that I consider myself to be your son also—*i. e.*, I have no doubt in my mind.

128. **Affectionate nephew**—How does he become a nephew? If he marries Lydia, he is Mrs. Malaprop's son-in-law. Perhaps nephew had not the very restricted sense of the modern time when Sheridan used it. *Cf.* Shakespeare's use of the word 'cousin' for any relation.

133. **More elevated character**—From Ensign Beverley to Captain Absolute is an elevation or a rise a promotion in rank!

137. **Assurance**—Impudence, check.

142. **I am glad that you have made a fool of the father**—A father would hardly be happy at being duped, but in this instance, Sir Anthony is happy in as much as the boy has proved by his tricks that he is not the stupid idiot that his father almost felt he was. And now Sir Anthony remembers all the pretence and repeats them!

158. **Elegant compilation**—She means elegant compliments. Now is the time for Jack to find all means to defend his conduct!

166. **Reflected on my parts of speech**—made the uncomplimentary remarks regarding my language.

169. **Anticipate the past**—We *retrospect* over the past and *anticipate* the future. But Mrs. Malaprop reverses the verbs.

176. **'Youth's the season made for joy'**—From Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728), II. ii; the actual word is joys.



182. So much thought bodes me—Such thoughtful attitude now,—and not speaking,—does not promise me much hope of success.

185. That damned monosyllable—"Sir" used by Lydia, which shows her anger or displeasure, and hence the language or words of strangeness.

189. Friend's consent, indeed—That is exactly what she did not want—she wanted an elopement, with all the thrill of not having been permitted to marry him, and then running away. But his words, "Friend's consent," show that he was anxious for their approval.

192. For your fortune, the lawyer—He is so generous as to offer to settle on her permanently some portion of the property that she is to come to. This is the settlement. He shows that he is all practical, while Lydia is still living in the world of romance and phantasy!

196. License—For marriage.

203. No constraints upon inclination—No check or force employed to control or curb your natural feelings. If you do not want me, you are free, and there will be no force to make you marry me against your wishes.

205. What a little spirit will do—when request does not succeed, he may show that he is a man of spirit or self-respect and thus may win her heart.

228. Which sealed a vow—A kiss was a sort of sealing or fixing up of the vow of love made by each other. In western marriage, after the marriage, the husband kisses his wife, which is a sort of seal put upon a contract drawn up and signed by both.

233. Its merit over the original—Though this picture does not equal you in portraying your physical beauty, and hence is not valuable, still, from my point of view, it is more valuable in as much as it has a greater quality—constancy—than the original or yourself.

237. Sure, now—All said with a satire. "What does it matter if the promises were made and oaths were taken in which the angels were called to witness? We can easily break such vows. There is no sanctity in them." This is like Old Kaiser of Germany speaking in 1914 of 'treaties' as 'so many scraps of papers.'

242. That miss didn't know her own mind—People will make comments which may not be charitable to you or to me. For example, they will say that lady was flirting with the man without knowing what she was doing, which is a sign of insincerity. Or they may say that the man grew tired of the lady—which is no compliment to his constancy, and is also a reflection upon her conduct ! A very clear hit !

252. Billing and coming—Love-making. Pigeons put their bills in each other's mouth and coo, while in the act of making love.

256. I am quite analysed—'Paralysed'—hence astonished.

262. Cerberus—The watch-dog of the king of the nether world, Pluto. He had three heads. He was dog and not a gentleman. Jack has played so far two parts. Did he have another one, asks Mrs. Malaprop.

273. You have been to lively—Mrs. Malaprop's suggestion, that she hoped he had not behaved disgracefully towards Lydia, starts the idea in the mind of Sir Anthony that perhaps the young Jack has been too forward and bold in his behaviour to the lady—almost to the bounds of immodesty !

280. The blood of the Absolutes.....—He admits that he himself was like this in his behaviour and all the family have been like this. This is a bit of obscenity.

#### ACT IV. SCENE III

3. In one's way in love-affairs—Interfere with the smooth success of one's own love. The military officers were always an attraction to young girls because of fine dresses. We find a similar instance in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, with Kitty falling in love with, and in Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, when Bathsheba falls in love with Sergeant Troy.

8. A touch of the old serpent in them.....—As serpents are caught with a display of a bright garment, women, like the serpents, are attracted by the bright-red dresses of army officers.

15. A little gypsy—used contemptuously for Lydia who is a young girl.

18. With the great pleasure—without the least qualms of conscience, but on the contrary with almost a joy in doing such a murderous deed.

27. **Subtle disputant**—Too clever an arguer, since you hear an argument or opinion I never gave.

38. **I should not have discovered this**—Your conversation at this time is almost so rude that if I had not known you previously to be a gentleman, I would have taken you to be an ill-bred man.

54. **Spring Gardens**—This was on the East bank and on the other side of city. Hence, not much chance of anybody coming and disturbing the duel. Duels were not permitted but people fought them in such surreptitious manner.

65. **A little after six**—Duels were fought generally at dusk for fear of being otherwise discovered.

68. **Small-sword light**—light enough for a duel with a small sword, and not fit for a duel with pistols, in which case people stood at a distance.

71. **Demons**—Spirits, or rather evils spirits.

74. **Spirits**—energy.

77. **Duty and inclination**—Her sense of duty *i. e.*, obedience to her mother, and her natural inclination or affection, for you both should have made her think of you.

79. **Just as the eye**—Said out of the bitterness of his heart.

85. **To wind up the whole**—to end my catalogue of sorrows, here's a challenge given to me, with all the politeness and courtesy of a gentleman.

97. **My be accommodated**—Settled peacefully without resort to a duel.

110. **To bid me return her letters**—when lovers broke their engagements, they were supposed to return all love-tokens or gifts as well as letters, which otherwise could be used later on for defamation and black-mailing, if the man were a rascal.

120. **There's stubbornness**—Here is what you thought would be stubbornness and anger. On the contrary, she is so considerate and pardoning.

120. **Forward**—In the sense of immodest and indelicate. For a woman should accept love demurely, not jump into her lover's arms. *Cf.* Shakespeare :

We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;  
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo."

*A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, II. i. 241-42.



133. **Not unsought be won**—Refer to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, viii. 502-3 :

Her virtue, and the conscience of her worth,  
That would be wooed, and not unsought be won"

137. **A poor industrious devil like me**—I have laboured and tried to win my Lydia's love, and just when I should have obtained what I expected have suffered from the foolishness of other people. If I get angry and swear it is pardonable. But a man like you, who imagines difficulties every time when there is not the least cause, deserves not only no sympathy, but actual ridicule and contempt.

149. **Touchstone**—He is always doubting Julia's sincerity and cannot be satisfied by any amount of proof.

153. **Dross of selfishness**—A metal which is not pure is always mixed up with an alloy. Dross is the impurity found in a metallic deposit, from which the metal is purified after cleaning.

#### ACT V. SCENE I

2. **Why such charge to be alone**—Why does he charge one or insist upon me, not to allow anybody else to be present or to disturb in this ?

10. **Whose life is forfeited**—If a person was guilty of killing another in a duel, it was murder, for which he would be required to suffer the usual punishment himself—*i. e.*, to be hanged. Hence his life is forfeited, or lost.

26. **Then on the bosom**—Then you can be restfully on my bosom with no regrets or sorrow or doubts to worry you.

28. **While virtuous love**—A very rhetorical way of saying that virtue will curb or smooth thoughts which would upbraid or scold you for having doubted my sincerity, and take away the pain of compunction or hesitation which you would feel, thinking that you have got a love which you do not deserve.

45. **Perhaps your fortune**—you have already forfeited life, in the eye of law. Perhaps you have forfeited property also. In that case, whatever I have will be enough to support both of us. And besides, when one is in exile, he is not supposed to live in splendid style of life.

61. **Bearing your infirmities**—one who would tolerate your weaknesses or make allowance for them as no one else would do.

78. **To an imposition**—A deceit or fraud so painful as to have pierced my heart.

91. **Trifled with my sincerity**—Played insincerely with my *sincere* feelings. While I have been sincere, you have always doubted, and in the end have practiced a deceit to find out my sincerity.

95. **Probation**—A test or a trial. The tables are now turned ! Faulkland doubted her when he was sure of her, but now it is his turn to feel what she had felt, when she overthrows him.

106. **But one word more**—She does not want to be disturbed in her final speech by any expression of regret on his part.

110. **To charm you from that**—To remove you away from that temper, as if by magical influence.

114. **Let it be your least regret**—An emphatic way of saying that among the losses which you have suffered as a result of your suspicious temper, let this loss of having lost a sincere, loyal beloved be the most painful loss.

118. **Rivettted me**—Fixed as by a rivet.

124. **To become a principal**—Not be a mere second to watch by the side, but on actual participant in the duel itself.

127. **Like the moon's**—The moon, when it is full, increases the madness of people. Hence we use the word, 'lunatic,' from *Luna*—the moon.

133. **This fellow runs strangely in my head**—I am still obsessed with thoughts about him.

146. **Appetite**—any strong desire.

148. **Had young Absolute**—If young Absolute had been really Ensign Beverley, and not Jack Absolute, I would not have taken or accepted your confidential talk without a desire to check your capricious behaviour.

155. **Prettiest distress**—Her romantic nature had built a sort of distressful situation, from which her lover, like a brave hero, would rescue her. All that dream has been shattered !

156. **Smithfield bargain**—A sharp or a false bargain ; also it means a marriage in which considerations of money or property weigh most. Smithfield was formerly a cattle market.

The next few lines only indicate her romantic and almost childish fancy how she would have run away with her lover,

in a false disguise, getting down the window by a ladder made of rope and so on.....

159. **Scotch parson**—Such marriages could be more easily performed in Scotland than in England, when a process of law has to be gone through. Gretna Green in Scotland is an infamous place for such marriage.

163. **What have I to expect**—Bans have to be published *i. e.*, notice posted in the Church to ask any person who may object, to give reasons within fifteen days to ban the marriage. The rest is all a caricature of the marriage-ceremony, with the clerk, asking whether any person who has any objection to the marriage of Jack Absolute and Lydia etc.

171. **Spinster**—This was a form of reproach, indicating that a woman remained unmarried for want of a proper offer.

181. **Press me**—To prevail upon me by entreaties. **Pity his flame**—Have pity for the love which he feels and catch the glow of love from him and glow herself.

192. **Suicide, paracide and simulation**—It is not suicide but homicide, for suicide is self-murder. Paracide is her mispronunciation, for 'parricide,' which means murder of father. Simulation is used for 'salvation' but she means 'damnation,' for there is no salvation in murder. What is going on in the fields is Homicide, and damnation. Or does she mean dissimulation, *i. e.*, concealment under a false excuse?

194. **Antistrophe**—She means 'Catastrophe' or disaster. Antistrophe means movement of the chorus when the song is being sung in a Greek drama, and the chorus now moves suddenly into a different direction.

198. **Enveloped**—She means 'unburdened' or confessed or 'unwoven'; 'unveil' or reveal may be the word she meant!

200. **Ma'am**—Fag's speech is internationally round about to try their patience. This reminds one of Lancelot Gobbo's speech in the *Merchant of Venice*.

212. **He can tell you the perpendiculars**—The 'particulars,' or details!

216. **Slaughter, or man-slaughter**—Homicide, or murder or culpable Homicide, not amounting to murder—such decisions can be arrived at only when the jury gives its opinion. In English law, criminal cases had to be tried before a jury.



227. **O, to be sure**—Lydia's suddenly awakened interest in Captain Absolute is refreshing to Mrs. Malaprop.

233. **Folks don't use**—David's report is such frightening exaggeration. For where are the fire-arms? "It was a small sword light, not meant for fighting by pistols. And in this list he brings in all words which have fire as an affix—including fire-engine also!

235. **Crackers**—These are the petty 'fire-works' used for festival!

236. **Has an angry favour**—And now, David suddenly under-rates the danger. It has certainly the appearance of anger or of people in anger.

240. **For mentioning him first**—David is at the height of folly! At a time of such crucial danger, he is apologising for lack of courtesy or apparent discourtesy, in mentioning the name of Bob Acres before Squire Faulkland; Precedence here also!

245. **Inelegant**—Hardly the right word; she means "improper."

246. **We should.....things**—Our interference would only 'precipitate' matter, or hurry up the matter.

249. **Philistine**—The Philistine were ancient warlike race in Palestine, who fought against the Jews, and hence are spoken of contemptuously in the Bible. Hence any man of materialistic point of view, or an uncultured person. But David uses it as inaccurately as Mrs. Malaprop would have used!

253. **Derbyshire petrifications**—Petrifications which were common in Derbyshire. Petrification means being turned into stone.

255. **Felicity**—Perhaps she means 'ferocity' or force, speed etc.

260. **He will exhort us**—"He will Escort us."

261. **Envoy**—This comes as a sort of a post-script at the end! She should say "Prologue"!

262. **Precede**—For 'Proceed.'

263. **Not a step before**—David again shows his love of formality. He will not preccde, but will follow the ladies!

266. **We shall here**—Fag does not seem to be properly informed. They are to fight with small swords.

## ACT V. SCENE II

1. **A sword seen**—See previous note on regulations in regard to wearing swords in Bath. See p. 223. (Act III. Sc. IV. 67).

**Takes a circle**—an indirect way, so as not to come up against his father.

11. **You have the advantage of me**—you seem to know me, or think you do. while I do not know you.

16. **Your humble servant**—this is mockery in Sir Anthony.

25. **I thought you were looking for me**—Jack has been caught in his own lies. On the one hand, he has said that he came on purpose to look for his father, and now he gives another reason.

37. **You find it cool**—making an effort to suggest that Sir Anthony should get indoors, and not expose himself. We know he was a patient of gout, and this illness increases in cold weather. But Jack does not succeed, for his main purpose was to get Sir Anthony out of his way, so that he may not be disturbed in fighting the duel.

51. **Trinklets**—Small ornaments, which he pretends that he proposes to present these before Lydia as a sign of his love.

55. **Ha ! Ha ! Ha !**—We must give Jack the credit of having a lot of presence of mind, for he certainly is able to invent excuses and explanations almost on the spur of the moment. This is a pretence of joking.

64. **Fall upon a fiddle-stick's end !**—As a sort of exclamation of contempt. The word fiddle-sticks is used in such a manner.

72. **Murder ! thief ! fire !**—David is a true student of the school of Mrs. Malaprop. He raises a hue and cry, but says 'Stop fire' when he means 'stop thief'—a cry which is generally raised, when a thief is running away, so that the people near him may catch him.

96. **Not an inch**—He means perhaps 'every inch.' He will call every person he can recollect the name of, to assist in separating the contestants.

99. **Give me your shoulder**—Sir Anthony is a patient of gout and hence walks with a bit of difficulty.

102. **I'll bauble him**—He (Jack) talked of trinklets and bau-

bles. I will teach him for this lying.

### ACT V. SCENE III

**Enter Sir Lucius & Acres with pistols**—How ? had it not been decided nor it was to be small swords ? Perhaps it is like this. Sir Lucius is to fight with Captain Absolute with small swords, while Bob Acres is to fight with Ensign Beverley with pistols !

1. **Forty yards**—A distance of forty yards has no meaning when one is fighting with pistols. It is a weapon used at a very close range. Bob is so nervous that he wants to escape as easily as possible. He is an arrant coward.

5. **You must leave those things to me**—the seconds or the persons who assisted in such duels generally settled such matters of detail.

9. **Fight in a sentry-box**—As close as that—almost hand to hand fight. Sentry-box is the wooden box generally at the gates of house for sentries to watch from. It is very narrow, hardly 4 feet square.

16. **Three or four feet**—Sir Lucius seems to know these regulations pretty well, since he comes from Ireland, where, he says, people are not disturbed in such matters.

24. **Any little will or commission**—Any wish of yours you would like to be fulfilled or any duty you may commission me with. 'In case of an accident' is a polite statement for 'In case you get killed.'

30. **Quietus with it**—A final discharge or settlement, which means death, here.

34. **Pickled and sent home**—Your body to be embalmed and sent to your place for final burial rites.

35. **Abbey**—Westminster Abbey cannot be meant. It may mean the Abbey of Bath, for in such places people of reputation are buried.

36. **Very snug lying**—Very comfortable rest ! There is no crowding here, for few people have such an honour, and hence you get quite a comfortable piece of land entirely for yourself. Sir Lucius speaks with a coolness, as if he is trying to secure lodging for Bob Acres at an inn or a Hotel !

46. **Side-front**—Turn your side, so that the portion of the body at which the opponent can aim is reduced.



58. **Vital part**—The heart. 'Vita' in Latin stands for 'life.' If a person stands with side front, the bullet may, if it fails in piercing the right side, go through the left.

65. **Clean through your body**—The calmness with which Sir Lucius speaks is almost charming. A bullet or a ball may go through him without doing him any harm—*i.e.*, without killing him.

67. **May they**—It does not matter in the least if they do. Let them pass.

69. **As life be shot**—As willingly be shot in one attitude as in the other. Hence I do not want to change.

79. **We won't run**—He suggests what he actualiy feels. He would like to run away. The idea is surprising to Sir Lucius who never heard a men run away from a duelling place.

87. **Edge in**—Mention it between your speech.

92. **Valour will come and go**—Sometimes we feel brave and sometimes not !

93. **Keep it fast**—Fixed up, tied, so that it cannot go or escape.

94. **I doubt**—I am afraid that it is running away or slipping.

107. **Well Mr. Acres**—Sir Lucius is surprised that Bob should be so civil to a person with whom he is soon to fight a duel.

108. **So Mr. Beverley**—Mistaking Faulkland for Beverley, for he has never set his eye upon Ensign Beverley.

119. **Cantakerous**—Quarrelsome, or rather here, unsupporting.

136. **Give up his pretentions**—His claims to love Lydia.

141. **In whatever way you please**—In whatever manner you propose to fight—either by pistols or by swords.

149. **Backs and abettors**—He swears in the name of "backing one's friends" and "abetting them."

159. **Well, Sir**—Said defiantly, but Bob suddenly, at the threat, becomes cowed down.

171. **Ay—at home**—Not here.

173. **My little counsellor**—This is an address to the sword.

179. **Bind his hands over**—A mixed phrase, said by David in the course of the confusion caused. A person is 'bound' in

the sense of obliged, under pain of punishment, for a period of time, 'to keep good behaviour.' He is required to execute a written statement that he will keep peace ; or all these people can be asked to give an undertaking for good behaviour. But how can the hands of Bob Acres be bound to keep their good behaviour ? David takes the word 'bound' in the physical sense of binding the hands of an arrested man !

181. **Put up**—Put your sword in your scabbard.

185. **I serve his Majesty**—The question of honour with an army officer is of paramount importance.

186. **Here's a pretty fellow**—The questions and answers which Sir Anthony is required to ask makes it look so ridiculous and laughable !

199. **Let's have no honour before ladies**—"Let's not have all this unpleasant talk of people insulting the honour of somebody at such a time." But her phrasing makes it as if honour and ladies are both incompatible !

200. **How could you intimidate us**—For once, Mrs. Malaprop has used the word more or less correctly. "How could you frighten us in this manner."

204. **No delusions**—No allusions to the past, which is gone and buried.

212. **Your reproof**—Your scolding me not to trifle reminds me of my duty to his gentleman.

219. **I should not fear to support a real injury**—I am prepared to take the consequences of whatever real injury I may have done to a man's reputation etc.

223. **I will support my claim**—I will defend my right to her affections.

223. **Dissolve my mystery**—*Resolve* my secrets.

241. **I own the soft impeachment**—How can impeachment be soft ? She means the impeachment for such a thing as love, which is a soft or delicate affair. Perhaps !

246. **Benignity**—'Dignity' perhaps ! though we can interpret it to mean, "when you become more conscious of my kindness and goodness to write such love-letters"—

253. **I will give you my Delia**—This and the next few lines are rather hard upon Mrs. Malaprop, who is being offered to any person who is prepared to have her.

261. **A chance of pickling me**—"If ever I give you a chance to find me engaged in a duel, call, call me a dunce."

270. **Hope is the child**—Hope is born only when one is repentent—the hope that one may be truly pardoned, by one's beloved, when one has truly repented one's folly.

272. **You have not been**—Just as your fault has been that you have treated me unkindly, mine also has been that I did not resent it in the very beginning, in which case, things would not have developed so far.

293. **I'll order the fiddle**—Music to accompany or rather to celebrate the joy of the occasion.

296. **We single lads**—Bob Acres, Sir Lucius—but does this include Sir Anthony also ?

310. **Was always to me for it**—"you mean to intimate that all your sorrows were due to my behaviour." But this hardly has the time to spoil the joy by starting quarrels.

315—16. **Deny its pencil—Lasting**—The picture which hope makes us imagine is too rosy to prove true. Hence, let our hope be more restrained in picturing one future happiness.

316. **When hearts deserving happiness**—When young couples who sincerely wish for a joy or happiness which would come to them through their marriage desire to be united, virtue should consummate or adorn their wishes by giving them modest feelings which do not hurt *i. e.*, where there is no anger, jealousy, suspicions. But passion is foolish enough to introduce a note in such a strong powerful feeling which would disturb their peaceful life.

## EPILOGUE

2. **Coax some moral**—A drama should have a moral purpose behind it. This was true of all literature, according to some people.

5. **Whether damn'd or not**—*i. e.*, Whether the public disapproves the drama by damning it. It should be remembered that the first draft of the drama was damned.

7. **Obedience**—obedience is due to us from man, as it is in our right.

9. **The Cit**—The citizen, accustomed to avoid quarrel at home, prefers to take his meals outside. But first, he must secure his wife's permission.

13. **The surly squire**—The rude, rough squire goes on curs-



ing and swearing half the day, saying that his wife is a fool, but at night, he changes to flattering his Kate, speaking of the charm women have !

18. **Bacchus**—The god of wine. Hence, the drunkard, even when he is emptying bumpers of wine, toasts Chole, and kisses her.

22. **Will sometimes counsel with a lady's eyes**—Ladies played a large part in the promotion of many statesmen, specially in the eighteenth century. On their smiles and frowns have depended promotion or disgrace ; by means of a courtesy, promises that a pension will be secured to some one, and a post or place to another.

31. **Steals one small spark**—The poor peasant, surrounded by a world of darkness and property, finds one cheerful thought in the bit of love which he gets at home—and this is enough to cheer him up in life. And this is sometimes all the joy to be found in the cottage, where there is no other warmth, physical or metaphorical.

34. **The wand'ring Tar**—The wandering sailor ; tar standing tar-paulin, or canvass, and hence the sailors.

42. **List**—listen to her cries.

52. **In female breasts**—If in woman's heart sense and merit prevailed, the lover would ask for no other schooling or guidance.

54. **The Scholars of our eyes**—The persons who learn from our eyes whether we approve or not. For in that case, the Beaux would turn away from all this gallantry.

*Raza Jaha*  
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*Raza Jaha*

## ADDENDUM TO THE NOTES ON THE PROLOGUES

### (A) Introduction to the Two Prologues

A 'Prologue' is usually a poem recited before or first part of a play. It is a custom among old dramatists to introduce a play to the audience through a 'Prologue' and to end it with an 'Epilogue.' Usually it was put in the form of a discourse recited in a sing-song manner or delivered in an oratorical style before the audience, either by the dramatist himself or put into the mouth of one or more among popular actors or actresses before the play began.

Sheridan has prefixed two Prologues to "The Rivals." The first is in the form of a conversation between two actors viz., Mr. Woodward (who played the part of Captain Absolute at its first performance) and Mr. Quick who represented Bob Acres. The second Prologue is in the form of a speech put in the mouth of Mrs. Bulkley who played the part of Julia.

While introducing the play to the audience, the first Prologue seeks to explain its aim, purpose and character, apologises for any defects of short-comings and craves the indulgence of its *clientele* for a patient and sympathetic hearing and judgment after its presentation on the stage.

### (B) Points to be Noted for the Understanding of the First Prologue

The background to the first Prologue will be clear from the following :

(1) After his romantic marriage with Miss Lineley, Sheridan began to move in expensive society and, being driven to the necessity of earning money, he took up the study of law at the Temple though not so seriously. It was perhaps this preoccupation with the study of law that suggested to him the imagery or rather the allegory of a trial at a Court of Law in his appeal to the audience for favourable judgment and sympathetic appreciation of his drama on its first presentation on the stage. "It may be worth noticing, in connection with the form of the Prologue and the use of these legal terms, that Sheridan had not long before dabbled in the study of law, having entered as

a student of the Temple."

—Low and Collins.

This device of the dramatist, appealing to his audience for a favorable judgment through the imagery of a Court-trial has certainly some element of originality in it. Here the play is the brief of the solicitor, the judge is the audience and the sergeant-at-law is the barrister who presents the case of the dramatist by a brief summary to enable the audience to deliver the verdict on which the success or failure of the drama depends.

(2) When the play was first produced on the stage at Covent Garden on January 17, 1755, it proved a dismal failure, which was chiefly due to the bad acting of Lee who played the part of O' Trigger and the inordinate length of the drama, especially the Julia-Falkland episode. Thereafter, Sheridan withdrew it for a thorough revision on which it was reproduced on the stage eleven days after, with a different cast. In order to suit this occasion, Sheridan recast the first Prologue in respect of lines 5-10 (From "Hey, how's this?...to no offence at all" and substituted them by 10 fresh lines in their place.

### (C) Substance of the First Prologue

(1) The Sargeant-at-Law (barrister) who is given a piece of paper, supposed to be the brief prepared by the Attorney, pretends to be unable to read it till he relents on being paid some money. When the barrister finds that the brief is about the play of a dramatist, he says that he will be only too glad to present the case before the judges (the audience) without charging any fees at all. At this, the Attorney pays his compliment to the barrister for offering to do the work of a poet as a labour of love.

(2) To the barrister's dig at the poor lot of poets, the Attorney retorts that if he combined poetic abilities with legal acumen he would undoubtedly make a far better lawyer. Well might the barrister adorn his professional wig with a twig of bay-leaves symbolical of poets. At this, the barrister advises the attorney to tell his poet that he should be better advised to change over into the legal profession before it is too late.

(3) The barrister now proceeds with his case before the judges, on whose verdict the success or failure of the play depends. The audience before him constitutes the sole and ultimate Court of judgement from whom there is no appeal to a higher Court of justice. If the judgement at this trial is adverse in the Convent Garden, there is no likelihood of a new trial



at the other Court, the Drury Lane Theatre. He is, however, pleased to notice that the audience, consisting of newsmen, critics, men of wit and learning, is kind and sympathetic to the author.

### (D) Critical Note

Sheridan's approach to the audience through the device of an allegory of a trial at a Court in which the final critical judgment on the success or failure of a play is to be passed by the audience, is very ingenious, novel and clever. Such an approach is calculated to appeal to the legislative mind of the average Englishmen. The presentation of the case for the play through a barrister (sargeant-at-law) is satirical enough in an age of satire. A contrast is also intended to be drawn between a lawyer and a poet.

### Notes

**Mr. Woodward**—He is the actor who played the part of Captain Absolute at the time of the first performance of the play. In the Prologue, he plays the part of the sergeant-at-law.

**Mr. Quick**—He is the actor who played the part of Bob Acres in the play and that of the Attorney in the Prologue.

**Following**—Coming after the barrister. **Giving a paper**—handing over the brief prepared by him. It is the business of the Solicitor to prepare the brief of a case. 2. **He means his fee**—the barrister pretends to be unable to read through the brief because the hand-writing is somewhat illegible and he is without his glasses. But he relents when the Attorney gives him his fee. 3. **The Scrawl improves**—This is a hard hit at the barrister whose vision gets better on receiving some money and he is now able to read well.

5. **Dibble**—is the name of the Attorney. 6. **A poet and a fee**—These two things cannot go together. So the barrister suggests that he would rather do a poet's work without charging any fee as a labour of love. 7. **You without reward etc.**—This is how the Attorney pays a compliment to the sergeant on his nobility in offering to do the work of a poet without fees. A contrast is intended between the large earnings of the legal profession and the proverbial poverty of poets. 8. **Mr. e**—The goddess of poetry. **So !—So.—Exactly so.** 9. **If the fee offends etc.**—The astute Attorney takes upon himself the offence of giving the fee. 11. **some...meet**—Among learned

lawyers present in law Courts, there are some who are as good as poets. 13. **Nor pleads...wig**—A lawyer is not any the worse for being also a poet. A lawyer gifted with poetical powers makes a better pleader. A barrister might, therefore, adorn his professional wig with a twig of bay-leaves, symbolical of the poetic craft. 15. **Full bottomed heroes**—Judges who were accustomed to wear wigs coming down to their shoulders. **On signs**—The sergeant-at-law here ridicules the-idea of the Attorney suggesting that it is only on the sign-boards of road-side inns and taverns that such curious and queer heroic figures—judges with their wigs coming down to their shoulders, adorned with laurel leaves—are painted. **This wig.....ways**—This is how the barrister advises the attorney to tell his client (the dramatist) to change over to the legal profession instead of continuing to suffer the pangs of poverty. 26. **Used to the ground**—As an experienced lawyer, he is used to take his stand on the floor of the Court-room to plead for his client. 29. **Dam'd in equity**—“When really guilty, escape on some technical legal flaw in the suit.” (Nettleton) *i. e.*, to dull the edge of legal justice by resorting to some lawyer's tricks. 30. **Judgment.....remain**—If the Court happens to pass an adverse judgment, it has to be accepted. 33. **Gave some favour**—He is pleased to notice that his audience at Covent Garden are favourably disposed towards him. 35. **Milder jury**—There is evidently no sign of anger or prejudice in their faces. 37. **A hiss, the gallows**—to hiss a play off the stage is one method of disapproval resorted to by the audience. **A groan, damnation**—Groaning is another method of disapproval by the audience if the quality of the play happens to be very poor indeed. 43. **His crime.....please**—Even if the play fails, his worst crime would be that he tried his best to please the audience which he unfortunately failed to do.

**Note**—On 10 inserted lines after line 45, after omitting lines 5-10 (“Hey, how's this ?.....no offence at all”). 46. **How's this** etc.—The sergeant-at-law is surprised when the Attorney hands in another brief of the poets' case, as he supposes. 47. **I suppose**—The sargeant-at-law now realises that it is the revised brief of the same play. It has been recast presumably on account of earlier failure. **We found.....the cause**—The Attorney now proceeds to assure the barrister that the Court *i. e.*, the audience did not reject the earlier play outright. **Did you...proceedings**—The sargeant-at-law enquires of the Attorney if the mistakes that had crept into the original text have now

been suitably corrected. **Come courage.....fee**—The Attorney assures the barrister that it is practically a new brief, having been thoroughly revised and improved upon. So it is now up to him to take up this new brief with every confidence and plead for its acceptance by the judges (*i. e.*, the audience) in his usually florid style and manner, now that an extra fee is made available for his troubles.

### The Second Prologue

#### (A) Occasion

When after partial curtailment of the Faulkland-Julia episode and some drastic alterations in the text of the original play, it was reproduced on the stage in a revised form, eleven days after, with some changes also in the personnel of the actors on 28th Jan. 1775, it was tremendous success. It rose high in public esteem and favour and was given a run for fifteen consecutive nights—a phenomenon which was very rare in the fortunes of any drama of the time. Encouraged by the phenomenal success, Sheridan wrote a new Prologue, which was spoken on the tenth night by Mrs. Bulkley, who acted the part of Julia.

#### (B) Analysis of the Second Prologue

Sheridan makes out a strong case against the Sentimental comedy which had become popular rather undeservedly popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. This is a bold step he is encouraged to take by the phenomenal success, attained by his first play, "The Rivals."

(1) At the outset, the spokeswoman of the dramatist (Mrs. Bulkley) distinguishes the function of comedy from that of tragedy (sentimental Comedy). Sentimental comedy is no comedy at all, as in it true wit and humour are replaced by sententious moralizing and laughter is replaced by tears.

(2) The case for true comedy, as it should be, has been presented in the revised form of "The Rivals" which has been accorded an enthusiastic reception by the audience. The work of the worthy Sergeant-at-law has indeed borne fruit. The spokeswoman (Mrs. Bulkley) would now proceed to set forth clearly the characteristics of the comedic Muse as distinguished from the Goddess of Sentimental Comedy.

(3) She (The Comedic Muse) has a lovely and bright face beaming with intelligence and wit. She breathes an atmos-



phere of gaiety and laughter, Her eyes scintillate with gay imagination bubbling forth the hints of love and triumphant smiles, wit and power of satire and sarcasm. She does not claim to teach moral lessons like the "goddess of the woeful countenance" and the Sentimental Muse. "She wants to cure the Comic Muse of its tearful travails and stem the efforts of 'the Sentimental Muse' to convert the theatre into a school of morality. Gravity does not become her for she is the very embodiment of the spirit of mirth, wit and love.

(4) As against her, the Sentimental Muse has a sad and solemn face. It is a pity that she has succeeded in banishing the mirthful figure of true comedy from the stage, and in preaching sentiment and virtue. Her votaries shed profuse tears. She has banished laughter from the stage. It is time, critics and dramatists started a campaign against this type of Sentimental Comedy in the interests of true comedy.

(5) Morality cannot be taught through comic scenes. So the cause of virtue and morality is best served by tragedy, the object of which is the purgation of the emotions, purification of feelings and to raise the audience morally and spiritually.

### (C) Critical Estimate

The dramatic works of Sheridan mark the height of the reaction against Sentimental Comedy. In this, Sheridan throws out a deliberate challenge to the authority of "the goddess of the woeful countenance—the sentimental muse" and in "The Critic," he mocks the 'edification' derived from the tearful travails of labouring sentiment and in *The School for Scandal* also he holds up to ridicule the sententious moralising of "weeping Sentimental Comedy" in the person of the hypocrite, Joseph Surface.

The popularity of "The Rivals" led Sheridan to make a bold statement in this Prologue of his own opinion on what a comedy should be. Its purpose should be correct manners and refine conduct, provide entertainment and to evoke laughter. Sententious moralizing and barefaced preaching have nothing to do with true comedy, which deals with the lighter side of life without arousing high emotions or passions. Laughter, playful wit, fun, light satire, without wounding the feelings and gaiety are the quintessence of true comedy. This is in short, Sheridan's conception of true comedy as against the typical late eighteenth century sentimental drama in which "in place of laughter, there

were tears and in place of intrigue, there were plenty of melodramatic situations and in place of rogues and gallants and witty damsels of the Restoration comedy, pathetic heroines, serious lovers and honest servants were introduced." Sheridan's chief weapons in his battle against the prevalent sentimentality were wit and satire without the indecency of Restoration comedy. While drawing up his satirical portraits, he made effective use of the techniques of exaggeration and well-managed situations. Again by means of his brilliant dialogues, Sheridan was able to reclaim the Congrevian Comedy of Manners and raise it to a new level, after purging it of its weaknesses viz., immorality of the Restoration period and the sentimentalism of the post-Stuart period in the early eighteenth century drama.

### Notes

1. **Granted our cause**—Now that the play has been accepted by the audience in response to the 'suit' presented before it by the Sergeant-at-law in the first Prologue.

3. **A different client**—Now that the worthy Sergeant has done his good work and the play has been favourably received, Mrs. Bulkley will now serve the cause of the Muse,—the goddess of poetry, by describing some of the characteristics of the comedic Muse to win the approval of the audience.

6. **In.....cause**—The cause of the Comedic Muse who is a female and her case is also presented by a female, Mrs. Bulkley.

7. **This form**—The Comedic Muse—the goodess—is represented with her favourite ivy branch, shepherd's stick and a comic mask.

9-10. **Where.....smiles**—Her eyes are indicative of a gay imagination with the help of which she weaves her fanciful plots suggesting love-intrigues.

11. **Light mask**—She has put on a light mask on her face, beaming with laughter effectively concealing her spirit of satire and hiding the natural blush of her face, produced by witty remarks in the comedy.

12. **Does...teach**—Does her face suggest the haziest idea of preaching or moralizing to be her aim?

15. **Is gray...youth?**—Her smiling lips, her eyes indicating gay invention i. e. laughter evoking plots and humorous situa-

ions—suggests that she has not been born for teaching morals. Her very face suggests that she has not acquired the ripe experience of age.

16. **Do Solemn...mouth**—Serious ideas do not quite fit in with her smiling face and her looks full of youthful fun and frolic. Gravity does not become her face.

17-18. The spirit of true comedy would rebel against any determined effort to make her put on a sad and grave face with her smiling lips. Comedy could indeed be a misnomer if forced to choose subjects that go contrary to gaiety and love-making.

21. **Must.....her**—Will it be in the fitness of things that laughter, fun, wit and frolic should be banished from the stage? It is much to be regretted that true wit and humour should thus be replaced by sententious moralizing and bare-faced preaching and we should turn to the Muse of tragedy or the sentimental Muse with her sad and solemn face.

29. **Weep a flood**—The Sentimental Muse delights in making her patrons or admirers, shed copious tears.

30. **She.....blood**—Serious lovers and weeping heroines would spoil the very spirit of comedy in these sentimental comedies and yet they are to be classed under comedies. Such a tendency runs counter to the very spirit of comedy.

31. **Harry Woodward**—who acted the part of Captain Absolute. **Dunstal**—who acted the role of David, servant of Bob Acres.

32. **Quick**—The actor who acted the part of Bob Acres. **Ned Shuter**—who played the part of Sir Anthony Absolute.

33. **Barsanti**—She played the part of Lydia Languish.

34. **Mrs. Green**—She played the part of Mrs. Malaprop.

**Note**—Sheridan means to say that if the Sentimental Muse is allowed a free hand, she will spoil all comicality from the comic characters in "The Rivals." So the time has come for the reintroduction of the Comedy of Manners on the English stage, thereby stemming the torrent of a weeping age and teaching men how to laugh once more. 35—**Dire-encroachment**—tragedy would intrude into the province of comedy with fatal results.

36. **Demands.....rhyme**—critics and dramatists should raise their voice against this intrusion of the Sentimental Comedy into the field of tragedy. 40. **Moral truth etc.**—It is not the



business of comedy to teach moral lessons. None of Sheridan's comedies point to a moral. They are just true pictures of contemporary life. Sheridan had no desire to use the drama as a means of direct moral instruction. He disclaims any other purpose in a comedy except entertainment. 42 **Youth's respect and Pity tear**—Tragedy expects respects from young persons and tears from a heart charged with pity. Tragedy "purges the emotions through pity and terror" in Aristotle's famous phrase.

44. **Can point.....hates**—When the cause of morality and virtue suffers at the hands of sinners, Nemesis brings about a retribution in a tragedy.

## ADDENDUM TO THE NOTES ON THE TEXT

### ACT I. SCENE I

#### (A) Analysis

1. A chance meeting between two servants (Fag, servant of Captain Absolute and Thomas, the coachman of his father, Sir Anthony) takes place in a street in Bath. In this meeting each is surprised at the unaccountable presence of his masters in the city, which is accounted for by the fact that (a) Captain Absolute is courting the rich heiress, Miss. Lydia Languish in the role of a poor half pay sub-lieutenant, Ensign Beverley; (b) and that Sir Anthony has suddenly decided to pay a visit to Bath with his ward, Julia, for his gout.

2. *Background-knowledge of the Social Life in Fashionable Bath.*

Fag, who is superior in wit and intelligence to Thomas, gives the latter detailed information about the past times, public walks, pump-room, pleasure-resorts etc. of Bath and thinks that he has a right to dictate to Thomas about what he is to do to keep himself up-to-date about his dress and manners in Bath, particularly in respect of his wig which has now gone out of fashion

#### (B) Dramatic Significance

Though the real plot of a play begins with a conflict, such conflict presupposes a certain existing condition of things and certain relations among the protagonists who are shortly to come into collision. The conditions and relations have to be explained to the audience in order that the story may be intelligible. All this is given in a division of the drama at the very beginning i. e., in the opening scene. This is called "the Intro-

duction" or "exposition" preparing the audience for the "initial incident" or "conflict."

The first scene is then a dramatic necessity in that it provides us with the "exposition" which gives us all the background information necessary for our proper understanding of the play. Sheridan does this by resorting to the time-honoured practice of bringing in some of the minor characters (*viz.*, the servants) to do this *e. g.*, we get the important information that the two main protagonists *viz.*, Captain Absolute and Miss Lydia Languish are engaged in a secret love-intrigue in the face of the stern opposition offered by the tough old aunt of the latter and that Miss Julia, the ward of Sir Anthony, of the minor plot, is also being courted by Faulkland, besides a picture of the social life of Bath, in which wig-wearing has gone out of fashion. "An interesting picture of the construction is the use of servants," who discharge the function of "chorus" in Greek plays.

#### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

12. Another fit of the gout—Notice that Sir Anthony is a man of quick decision. He has suddenly taken the decision to visit Bath to avoid another attack of the gout which the mineral waters of the city are supposed to cure.

15-16. This is Fag's estimate of the dominant trait in Sir Anthony's character. Every character of the Jonsonian type must have some 'humour' emphasised so as to be a fit subject for comedy.

19. I do.....now—Fag confides to his friend, Thomas, his master's secret about courting the rich heiress, Lydia under the assumed name of Ensign Beverley. But this only mystifies Thomas who fails to understand the hint, till it is explained by Fag later.

28 29. The dual role of Beverley and Captain Absolute provides fun.

39. Love—is the main *motif* of the comedy. More than one pair of lovers is to be ultimately jointed in wedlock, each having worked out his destiny in a plot of its own. This is suggested in the opening scene which acts as a kind of 'exposition' to the whole play.

41. Masquerader—Captain Absolute has put on the disguise of Ensign Beverley to attract Lydia—a lady of singular

taste—a spoilt child of ease and fortune whose head has been turned by too much romance-reading, who is always dreaming of elopement and run-away marriage with a poor but romantic lover.

49-50. **Lydia's romantic and sentimental conception of life** is such that she would rather forego a portion of her fortune than carry on her love-affair with a man highly placed in life. She hates an unromantic and humdrum-marriage and her romantic passion could be satisfied if she carried on love-intrigue with a poor Ensign.

55. **Lap-dog**—Rich ladies indulged in the fashion of keeping lap-dogs in the eighteenth century. Cf. Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" where the heroine, Belinda, kept a lap-dog with her.

63. **Lydia Languish**—a typical 'humour' character whose surname suggests that she is languishing with her sentimental conception of love—as she lay on her sofa, reading romantic novels with their stories of elopement, run-away marriages, thrills and excitements of secret love.

63-64. **Old tough aunt**—Mrs. Malaprop, the typical old aunt jealously guarding over her niece (Lydia) who, she thinks, she has the right to coerce into submission by means of certain sets of formulas beginning with "What has a young woman to do with.....?"

76-77. **Beau Nash** introduced order, decency and discipline into the social life of Bath. Beyond eleven hours in the night, no frivolities in the town are to be permitted. A reference is also made to another minor character, the servant of Faulkland, introduced into the play to ridicule sentimentalism.

86. **More's the pity**—Thomas cherishes conservative sentiments about wearing wigs which his more intelligent, roguish and arrogant friend, Fag, denounces as outlandish in fashionable Bath. Both the characters provide an interesting contrast.

97. **The excisemen**—Officer-in-charge of collecting taxes on goods manufactured in the country. **has taken.....carrots**—refers to the natural red colour of his hair.

105. **Madam Lucy**—That cunning and roguish maid of Mrs. Malaprop, who knows how to further her own interest by seeming to look after the interests of others entrusted to her.



## ACT I. SCENE II

## (A) Analysis

1. Reclining on her sofa, Lydia, the heroine of the play, sits on her sofa in the house of her 'tough aunt,' Mrs. Malaprop, with a romantic novel in her hand. Lucy, has just returned from the circulating libraries of the town with heaps of such romances.

2. Julia comes in to visit her friend, Lydia. They exchange the latest developments in their love-intrigues, particularly their worries in this regard. Lydia, for instance, is disturbed by several things viz., (1) her aunt's discovery of her secret love-intrigue with Beverley and her strong disapproval of the proposed marriage with him instead of with Bob Acres; (2) her quarrel with Beverley, which is of her own seeking as she just wants to enjoy the thrill of such a quarrel with her lover; (3) and her dislike of the attentions of the hateful Acres who is considered by her aunt to be a worthy suitor for her.

3. Julia—the emodiment of “oppressed innocence”—and the friend and cousin to Lydia of the main plot—is a contrasted character. She wonders why Lydia should be so eager to marry the poor Ensign when the real identity of the Ensign is discovered, she advises her friend, Lydia not to reject the advances of Captain Absolute, because such a marriage would upset her romantic plan of elopement. Lydia is very critical of Julia's tame submission to her lover, Faulkland's caprices, which Julia thinks proceed from his sincere love for her.

4. Lydia is now confronted with aunt, Mrs. Malaprop and the authoritative, Sir Anthony. The former considers that she has the right to intimidate her niece Lydia into accepting a husband of her choice in preference to the poor Ensign. Sir Anthony also joins in his denunciation of the girl's conduct in this regard with Mrs. Malaprop. They jointly put down Lydia's romance and obstinacy and ascribe them to her education. Lydia, however, remains adamant.

5. Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony now exchange their opinion on female education. He thinks that the romances distributed by circulating libraries have turned Lydia's head. He is all for no education for women, though Mrs. Malaprop would not go to such extremes, being of the opinion that a woman should know something useful. She makes herself really laughable by her muddle-headed use of learned words, arising

out of her vanity and egoism in a long blundering speech. Sir Anthony is simply amazed at her blundering folly and finds in her wrong use of words and her stupidity, enough justification for denying women even a little education.

6. Their talk turns to more important matters in hand, particularly the marriage of Lydia with Captain Absolute, the son of Sir Anthony. On Sir Anthony agreeing to send for his son to set him up as a most suitable husband for Lydia, Mrs. Malaprop agreed to withdraw her candidate, Bob Acres, from the field and to support the candidature of Captain Absolute. Both Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop are quite ignorant that Lydia's secret lover, Ensign Beverley, is no other than the same Captain Absolute. Both seem determined and confident that they would be able to inflict their choice on Lydia and Captain Absolute.

7. In her soliloquy, Mrs. Malaprop says to herself that it would indeed be a good plan to marry Lydia away at the earliest possible moment, for she strongly suspects her to be privy to her secret love-affair with Sir Lucius. She is confident that the simple-minded Lucy, her maid, who takes her love-letters to Sir Lucius, would not betray her. In reality, Lucy's simplicity is, indeed, a mask in the pranks, she plays on her clients including her mistress who is deluded into thinking otherwise. She takes special pride in cheating Sir Lucius into thinking that Mrs. Malaprop's love-letters are from the young Lydia and that "Delia" of the letters is really the charming niece of Mrs. Malaprop.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene completes what the opening scene has left unsaid about the main protagonists, their relationships, the situation and circumstances which have brought them to Bath through the mouth of the minor characters who have acted as a kind of "chorus" to the play. As such, its dramatic importance lies in *further exposition* or "Introduction" to put the audience in possession of all relevant information for the proper understanding of the play in several ways. (1) it brings the audience face to face with the situation ; (2) it introduces an element of "complication" and (3) it throws side-lights on the characters of the leading protagonists.

The "conflict" or clash of opposed passions and interests has already been hinted in the first scene in the love-intrigues.

With the opening of his conflict, the real plot begins from this scene, which is partly "exposition" and partly brings in "complication" *i. e.*, that part of the play in which the "conflict" continues in intensity while the outcome remains uncertain.

There is a "conflict" between Mrs. Malaprop's tendency to dominate Lydia, her ward and the latter's contrariant wish to persist in carrying out in actual practice her romantic conception of life and marriage. Complications arise between Lydia's choice of Beverley, as her lover and the proposals of Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop ; giving rise to farce and fun in the minds of the audience who know that the two supposedly rival lovers are really one and the same person.

Several ticklish situations are provided and cleverly manipulated in this scene to keep us in "dramatic tension and surprise." Most of them arise out of underhand plotting of the protagonists in the secret pursuit of their amours *e. g.*, (1) Captain Absolute's romantic love-intrigue with Lydia under the assumed name of Beverley ; (2) Mrs. Malaprop's secret love-affair with Sir Lucius ; (3) Mrs. Malaprop's "malapropisms" and her views on female education as contrasted with those of Sir Anthony ; (4) Lucy's mischievous tricks on her victims ; (5) Bob Acres' desperate attempt to pass for a town fop to set himself up as a candidate for the hand of Lydia in spite of his dismissal by Mrs. Malaprop.

The scene also tells us more about the characters of the principal protagonists and once more gives some finishing touches to the social background of upper-class life at Bath.

### Notes, References, Explanations Etc.

11. **Miss Sukey Saunter**—All such names suggest the character of the persons hearing them. Such names suggest their kinship with "humour comedy" of Ben Jonson.

18. **Dog's ear'd**—turned down corners of the books—a vicious practice with irresponsible readers. **It.....read**—it had become unfit to be read by a cultured man.

22-23. **Cherishes...notes**—Notes-making in the margin of a book with the help of long pointed nails of ladies is another vicious practice satirised here.

38. **The drops**—Slang for the 'smelling salt.'

39. **Here's some one coming**—Notice that the hypocritical morality of middle-class people would not permit the use by



young persons of novels and romances. Lucy puts away these latter books lest Lydia should be caught reading them.

54. **As.....dress'd**—He has to change his riding dress before he can present himself before Mrs. Malaprop.

65. **You just**—It is indeed hard for Julia to believe that a middle-aged woman, like Mrs. Malaprop should be involved in a love-intrigue at her age.

67. **Under a feigned name**—Delia is the name assumed by Mrs. Malaprop in her love-letters to Sir Lucius who is deluded into thinking that these letters are from the young Lydia, the rich heiress. Mrs. Malaprop discloses this secret in Act V. Scene III, where Sir Anthony comes to her rescue with a gentle irony: "Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet."

72. **Quite the contrary**—Instead of being sympathetic to her niece's secret love-affair with Beverley, being in love with Sir Lucius herself, Mrs. Malaprop is opposed to Lydia's affair.

81. **Made the discovery**—The interception of Lydia's love-letters to Beverley proves Mrs. Malaprop's indelicacy shamelessness and coarseness of conduct. Her idea of keeping young girls under constant restraint makes her tyrannical.

84. **Nothing at all**—Lydia is so romantic that she writes a letter by herself charging her lover Beverley with unfaithfulness, pretending that it is a warning from one of her friends. She does all this only to enjoy the thrill and excitement in her romantic love for him. She thinks that since Beverley would never dream of quarrelling with her, she should invent some excuse by which she could get him to quarrel with her. All this illustrates Lydia's romantic and freakish temperament and her conception of love, according to which she thinks that a little quarrel between two lovers is highly contributory to a theatrical show of passion, calculated to intensify their mutual love for each other.

103-106. When Julia wonders why Lydia should be so eager to marry a poor Ensign, being so rich herself, Lydia retorts that she finds romance in losing her fortune in marrying against her will, thinking that love has no relation with money and that being rich herself, she would still love a poor man. If her love insisted on her waiting for their marriage till she became of age, she would not love and marry him.

115. **You.....mistress**—you are free to decide things in your own way even though you are still under the guardianship of Sir Anthony whereas I have been kept confined by my aunt, Mrs. Malaprop.

127. **Captious**—Fault finding. **without dissembling**—Faulkland is at least honest in finding fault with Julia on the point that she does not love him enough.

128. **Fopperies of love**—vanity and mere show of love.

146. **A prosperous...him**—The strong gust of wind which overturned Julia's boat, proved to be fortunate for Faulkland as it was instrumental in winning the love of Julia, whose life was saved by the youngman.

208. **Preference for anyone else**—Mrs. Malaprop means to say that if she (Lydia) had not fixed her choice on anyone else, she would like her to marry Bob Acres. She thinks it better to begin married life with a little aversion, as in her own case. In lines 221-222, Lydia with characteristic way-wardness defies her aunt's right to dictate to her and gives a bit of her mind in a spirit of defiance. Lydia is determined to run away with young Beverley under any circumstances.

210-211. **What business...aversion**—Evidently, Mrs. Malaprop thinks she has the right to intimidate young women with her set of formulas beginning with "What has a young woman got to do with.....?" This attitude is typical of an old aunt, jealous in her guard over her niece. Lydia retorts that her aunt's choice of a husband will be her aversion.

240. **Evergreen tree**—Refers to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit of which was eaten by Eve and Adam after being tempted by Satan.

Sir Anthony considers a circulating library to be as harmful to the virtue and character of women as the Tree of Knowledge proved to be to Eve, who fell along with Adam and was ultimately driven out of Paradise.

242. **It...year**—Like the evergreen tree, a circulating library is open throughout the year and circulates books among its clientele, who are young and inexperienced young persons.

"Sir Anthony's remarks are hardly too strong, considering the books we have seen Mrs. Lydia choosing. Speaking of the novels of that time, Macaulay says that 'many of them were such

as a lady would without confusion own that she has read.' The name of the novel was held in horror among religious people. In decent families, which did not profess extraordinary sanctity, there was a strong feeling against all such works.....The novelist having little character to lose, and having few readers among serious people, took without scruple, liberties which in our generation seem almost incredible." (Low and Collins)

272. **Every third.....question**—Sir Anthony's thesis *viz.*, a girl's education is a mere waste, is amply borne out by the incidence of the wrong use of every third word in Mrs. Malaprop's speech.

Evidently, Sir Anthony is a good judge of character. With his keen sense of humour, he spots out the failings of the characters he has to deal with. He has enough reason to be satisfied with his own opinion about the dangers of female education—his thesis *viz.*, that girls should not be taught to read at all.

285. **Demur**—object. 290. **O'my conscience**—Conscientiously speaking. 296. **I will.....prudently**—I will handle the matter tactfully.

301. **Just to let...dinner**—This is how Sir Anthony advises the aunt to discipline Lydia by keeping her under lock and key even to the extent of starving her for several days to bring her under submission.

Note that it is the high-handedness of Mrs. Malaprop that engenders in her capricious mind a contrariety to her aunt's will.

305. **Partiality**—love. 306. **betrayed me**—divulged the secret of my love-affair with the Irish knight.

308-9. **Had.....her**—An example of 'unconscious irony.' Mrs. Malaprop is evidently under a delusion when she thinks Lucy to be too simple to understand her love-intrigues with the Irish baronet. Lucy's simplicity is only a pose and Mrs. Malaprop has not got the intelligence to see through it.

327. **Altering her manner**—She appears in her true colours now that she is alone and there is hardly any necessity to assume the mask of simplicity in order to achieve her selfish ends. She knows how to enrich herself by betraying or keeping other's secrets to serve her own interest.

335. **Ruffles**—an ornamental frill of lace worn at opening of garment—about the wrist, breast or neck.



349. **Sacrifice.....gentleman**—give up tender sentiments of a well-bred youngman to love a young girl.

**To the.....fortune**—The Irishman has the pride and refinement of a young gallant and, as such, he will not exchange love-letters with an old but rich woman like Mrs. Malaprop even to mend his fortune.

## ACT II. SCENE I.

### (A) Analysis

1. Fag informs his master, Captain Absolute, after his return the errand, on which he has been sent *viz.*, to contact his father and ascertain from him the time when it will be convenient for the latter to see the former, that his father was much surprised at the news of his son's presence at Bath. Fag had to invent a lie to appease the old gentleman's anger *viz.*, that his master had come on a recruiting mission, supported by figures. Captain Absolute though pleased with his servant's cleverness, is a bit suspicious of the veracity of the statement made by his somewhat roguish servant and warns him against indulging in unnecessary lies.

2. Faulkland now comes in. The two friends exchange the latest developments in their mutual love-affair. Captain Absolute keeps back from his friend the information about Julia's presence in town at first only to tease him. When told about the lovers' quarrel as between Captain Absolute and Lydia, Faulkland advises elopement with her when the Captain tells him that his procedure would involve him in a loss to the extent of two-thirds of her fortune. Faulkland advises his friend to propose to her aunt in his true character and finalise the matter. But Captain Absolute replies that this procedure is highly calculated to satisfy the romantic Lydia, and that she must be prepared for the discovery of the identity between him and his imaginary character (Beverley) in the usual course.

3. Their conversation now turns on Julia for whose health and spirits, Faulkland is much worried. The very idea that Julia should be so merry and gay in company during his absence, almost maddens Faulkland. At this stage, Acres comes in. He recounts at some length how Julia enjoyed dancing in company. All the while, Captain Absolute enjoys the fun. Bob Acres has already been told about the presence of Julia in town. Faulkland cannot stand all this any more and leaves them shocked.

4. Acres now confides to Captain Absolute the progress in his love-affair with Lydia. To make himself more presentable to Lydia, Bob Acres has now given up his country-manners and has transformed himself into a fashionable city-beau. All the while, he is totally ignorant of the fact that Captain Absolute is no other than Beverley, whom he would now challenge to a duel with a swaggering air, uttering all manners of oaths.

5. Sir Anthony now enters on the scene. He wonders as to what his son might be recruiting in Bath and then comes straight to business for which he has come to his son. He is old and is consequently anxious to see his son settle down to married life independently with a large estate. He wants his son to marry a rich heiress of his choice, which Captain Absolute at once retorts that he cannot possibly marry a girl whom he has not known or seen—the more so because he has already pledged his plighted word to another lady. This point-blank refusal of the son to marry the girl of his choice, puts the father in a frenzy. He repeats that if his son disobeys him in this regard, he will disinherit him and even disown him and leaves the room in a fit of passion.

6. Captain Absolute is now thoroughly upset and does not know how to wriggle himself out of this *impass*. He is, however, as determined as ever not to marry against his choice. He cannot but think that his father has taken up a very unreasonable attitude in this matter of thrusting his choice of a wife on him. He himself married for love and lived a gay and reckless life. At this stage, Fag comes to tell him that his father has really been very furious and violent to everybody whom he met on the way.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene presents the first crisis in which the hero representing the main plot, takes a hand, to be “complicated” still further by the rivalry of Bob Acres and fully followed by a second crisis, the denouement and the conclusion. The complications created by Bob Acres lead to a second crisis at a later stage. These complications arise from the clash of opposed forces. They continue to increase until a point is reached at which a decisive turn is taken in favour of one side or the other.

The scene starts to depict the situation of three rival lovers for the hand of Lydia viz., Absolute, Faulkland and Bob Acres

with their respective 'humours' or dominant traits by means of the dialogue (comic invention of Sheridan). The conflict arises out of Sir Anthony's attempt to thrust on his son his choice of a wife. This is seen in the altercation between the angry father and the equally determined son. Bob Acres' rivalry complicates the scene still further, as we envisage out of this the duel-scene where the second crisis will be presented. All these elements have in them farcical elements which contribute to the enjoyment of a lot of fun. The crisis in the Faulkland-Julia episode is also hinted here. The scene also throws a considerable side-light on some of the main protagonists of the play.

### Notes, References, Annotations etc.

2-3. **You had...you**—Even a son has to stand on ceremony with his father in a predominantly artificial age by deputing his personal servant beforehand to ascertain from his father if he is at leisure to meet his son.

7. **Rapt out**—uttered on the spur of the moment which is quite consistent with the impulsive Sir Anthony.

10. **The precise lie**—Fag does not exactly remember the excuse he made to Sir Anthony to explain why his master is at Bath at the moment. Notice that Fag is keenly alive to his master's interests and without any specific instruction from him, he would invent lies in defence of his master's conduct.

10-14. **O, I lied, sir.....little consistently**—Finding that the lie, uttered by Fag in explanation of his master's stay at Bath, viz., that his master is at the town for recruitment of soldiers in the army, might not satisfy his master. Fag now suggests to his master that both should fix up a lie by way of explanation and stick to it subsequently so that the fact of lying may not be detected. A definite lie, consistently repeated, has the semblance of truth.

24. **One says.....inferiors**—Fag invariably addresses Thomas without prefixing to his name 'Mr.' whereas Thomas calls him 'Mr. Fag'—In the society of servants, Fag loves to give himself the airs of superiority over the rest of his class in status by virtue of his wit and knowledge.

26. **Men, money, or constitution**—These are the three objectives, Captain Absolute might have in view, corresponding with the three meanings of the word 'recruit viz., (1) to enlist new soldiers for the army ; (2) to fill up deficiencies ; and (3) to recover health.



30. **Give the thing an air**—in order to invest our common lie with the semblance of truth. 32. **Minority waiters**—"Persons waiting for a government appointment, which, however, they despair of obtaining as their party is in a minority in parliament." (Balstun). 36. **Current lie**—a lie with an appearance of truth, which is acceptable like current coins. 38. **Hurt your credit**—betray your lying by bringing suspicion on your honesty in case his "precise lie" bought to be backed up by too many false statements in its support. 54. **Hurt one's conscience**—He (Fag) thinks that his conscience is safe when he tells a lie. It is only when he is detected that it is hurt.

63. **How stand matters**—what are the latest developments in your affairs? 65. **Lose...fortune**—Captain Absolute has sense enough to condemn the romantic idea of elopement, which he considers as absurd as the idea of foregoing money and estate. He would not agree to lose too-thirds of Lydia's fortune by a run-away marriage. 81. **Make...her**—make her fall in love with me so that I may become really indispensable to her. **Before .....it**—Before I disclose to her my true identity. 83. **Not in spirits**—Faulkland cannot enjoy himself in the absence of Julia. Note that Faulkland is a 'humour' character whose jealousy is carried to comic exaggeration. He is the typical sentimental lover who is hurt when he subsequently learns that Julia has been enjoying herself during his absence.

93-97. **Ah, Jack, your heart...of all**—Faulkland institutes a comparison between his love and that of his friend, Captain Absolute. The former is like a desperate gambler out for a big win by holding large wagers, staking his all, whereas the latter is like a thoughtless gambler who will play again at stake if he loses the first throw. If Absolute's romantic wooing bears no fruit, he will give his heart to some other girl.

96 **My sum...cast**—All the happiness of my life is staked on a single throw. **stript of all**—deprived of everything that I value in life. 99. **Conjure up**—visualise, imagine.

110-114. This speech of Faulkland is typical of a 'humour' character in whom jealousy is put to extreme length. When asked by Captain Absolute to give his grounds for his being so very uneasy in his thoughts over the question of the health and well-being of Julia, Faulkland rises to fanciful heights hinting all kinds of imaginary possibilities.

Faulkland is the true sentimentalist of the school generally

condemned by Sheridan and treated by him in a spirit of genuine comedy. Sheridan evidently felt that he could not forbear to laugh at his sentimentalists.

119-120. **I should be...that**—Julia's sincerity and depth of love are called into question by Faulkland on his theory that 'no smile shall live, till they meet again' with such ridiculous conception of love. Faulkland torments poor Julia so much so that she is at last driven to despair.

146. **A concealed...rival**—Bob Acres considers Beverley as a coward courting Lydia in a manner concealed from all eyes. 150-153. **Warm...the Mall**—This is how Bob Acres, the foolish country-squire, describes his journey on the road to Bath. He feels somewhat hot after the exciting journey during which whips were cracked and the wheels of the stage-coach rattled along the stony pavements of fashionable Bath. As the carriage proceeded, it left behind it a trail of dust, like the tail of a comet in the sky.

167-169. **Never.....Spa**—Bob Acres, while describing to Faulkland to whom he is introduced by Captain Absolute, chooses his oaths (with which he usually begins talking) suitable to the topic (*viz.*, health and beauty of Julia) and tells him that last time he met her in Devonshire; she was in the best of health and spirits; like people who seek both at the famous German spa.

175. **Fretted myself ill**—Faulkland, the type of the capricious and over-sentimental lover, loved to torture himself and the innocent Julia. He is irrationally jealous and unnecessarily suspicious. In his anxiety for the health and well-being of his beloved, he almost made himself ill. He always carries with him "a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the furniture of a country miss's brain."

195. **what...away**—Faulkland has indeed a romantic conception of himself as an ideal lover. His theory is that "the mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers, is a compact, that no smile shall live till they meet again." How could Julia be happy when he was away?

197. **Apprehensive spirits**—Captain Absolute points out the contradictory position taken up by Faulkland. Faulkland was at first anxious about the health of Julia. But when he is informed that she has been in the best of health and spirits, Faulkland thinks that she ought not to have been so, during his



absence, which, he thinks, is due to the fact that Julia is by nature, gay in company and has a frivolous temper.

213. **Harpsichord**—a musical instrument—the predecessor of modern piano.

212-17. **That she has...concert**—Acres goes on describing Julia's mirth and gaiety—her accomplishments in singing and dancing, proceeding out of her gay and happy disposition. She is good at her harpsichord. She has a wonderful command over her voice, matching musical notes, high and low with a swagger. Acres gives himself the airs of a great master of the art of music and a dancer, he himself trying to get up correctly the steps of French and Italian dances.

215-16. **Od's minnums and crotchets**—terms invented by Acres in imitation of musical vocabulary in the Italian language. 'Minumus' is a musical term denoting half-notes to semibreve. 'Crotchets' are notes of quarter value of a semibreve.

253. **She...absence**—When Faulkland is told that she was quite happy, and that she sang, danced and mixed in company, he loses his mental balance on account of his fanciful conception of love, according to which she ought to have been sad.

258. **Damned levity**—accursed frivolity.

261. **Ceremony of societies**—Social formalities. 262. **Contain**—check. 263. **For form's sake**—for formalities' sake. 264. **A minuet**—a stately dance for two persons in triple measure. 266. **Od's swimmings**—she displays a smooth swimming motion during the dance. 267. **Such an air**—such graceful movement. 268. **Now...her**—Let disappointment attend her ways of amusement. 268-9. **Defend this**—This kind of levity is inexcusable in Julia. 286. **Warm-breathed sighs**—panting with passion. 268. **Each.....the chain**—One man's immorality infects other's in the chain. 307-313. **She could time**—After having described the mirthful life of Julia in the country, to the great disappointment of Faulkland, Captain Absolute explains that Faulkland is jealous of Acres, when Acres declares that his heart is really given to Lydia. But as he thinks that his country-dress of a fox-hunting squire is distasteful to his lady-love, he will discard his old dress and put on in his person the most imposing dress of a beau. 315. **The side.....restive**—The curly hair on the sides cannot be easily brought under the discipline of hair-dressing. 324. **'Tis genteel**—It is a fashionable kind of oath indulged in by upper-class people in high society. 332. **The**



'oath should be.....is not it? Bob Acres, the foolish squire, who aspires to be a city-beau and a gallant, thinks that merely by swaggering, he can win for himself the hand of Lydia. That is why he loves to indulge in high sounding oaths which he proudly calls "oaths referential" or "sentimental swearing" while in reality he is a coward whose cowardice is put to the severest test in the duel-scene. Notice how Sheridan often outlines character with broad strokes that suggest caricature. "The courage of Bob Acres dwindles to the actual vanishing-point when he feels his valour "oozing out as it were at the palms of his hands." This very comic exaggeration of cowardice, enhances the acting possibilities of the duel-scene."

325. **Militia**—Citizen's army for keeping the peace.

328. **The ancients**—People of ancient days. 330. **According to the sentiment**—Bob Acres is good at inventing oaths suitable to the occasion or ideas expressed. 332. **My little major**—"Commander in our Militia." 336. **Figures of imprecation**—cursing in terms of rhetorics or rhetorical language.

348. **Sir Lucius O'Trigger**—The Irish baronet always ready to fight a duel. Notice how Sheridan's dramatic personnel suggest their kinship with the "humour" comedy of Ben Jonson, in which certain dominant traits of character are emphasized for exaggeration. Thus Faulkland's "humour" is unreasonable jealousy as clearly as that of Sir Lucius's "love of fighting." 350. **Bumpers to little Lydia**—Glasses of wine will be drunk as a toast to Lydia's happiness. 374. **Is but... spirit**—The small amount of money now being set apart for a youngman of your ambition, spirits and habits, is much too small. 404-6. When asked by Captain Absolute if the noble independence contemplated by his father meant his leaving the army, he is surprised to be told that all this depended upon his taking a wife of his father's choice. The father's point is that if his son is to own an estate, he is also to take the girl who possesses the estate as his wife. Notice that in all this exchange of witty answers, as between the father and his son, provides a veritable intellectual feast of wit, humour, and irony. "If the characters talked as they would do in real life, they would be unbearably dull." It is the brilliant artificiality of the dialogues that makes the play a triumph of artificial comedy.

422. **Let her foreclose**—When a borrower (Captain Abso-

lute) cannot redeem the 'pledge' (his vow to marry Lydia) within the time-limit fixed up in the document, the lender has the right to sell the 'pledge' (article pawned) and perfect it." "To pledge anything is to make it a security for borrowed money. If the money is not paid *i. e.*, the pledge is not redeemed, within a certain time, the tender can be the right of redemption and treat it as an absolute property." (Balston)

427. **In this.....you**—Both Captain Absolute and Lydia are rebels against the intolerant position and attitude taken up by their guardians—Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop. Sir Anthony's desire to keep an iron hand over his son, both in boyhood and in youth, evokes contrarience in his son. Likewise, Mrs. Malaprop's high-handedness engenders in her capricious mind a passion for opposition to the aunt's will.

441. **some mass of ugliness**—some very ugly girl. 443-446. **Zounds.....Museum**—Sir Anthony would like him to marry the girl of his choice, who may be ugly, even if she may have a lump of flesh on both the shoulders bent and curved like the building known as "The Crescent." 446-7. **A skin like a mummy**—A mummy is the embalmed body of a human-being or animal, with dry and wrinkled skin. 452. **Jackernapes**—Coxcomb; monkey. 455. **Laughing in your sleeve**—laughing secretly without letting one notice it.

480-81. **Strep.....commission**—make you lose the position you occupy in the army as a Commissioned Officer. 481. **A five.....fence**—five shillings and three pence, money not worth the name. 483. **Unbeget**—declares that I am not the father. 489-91. **Yet he.....companion**—This is how Captain Absolute reflects on his father's unreasonable attitude and his "Absolute" way of inflicting on him his own opinion. The father tends to forget the inconvenient fact that he himself married for love and that he was reckless and gay in his youth. If old people were a little considerate and made allowance for the feelings of young persons, much misunderstanding between them could be avoided. 492. **Wroth to a degree**—very angry. 508. **Vilest injustice**—injustice of the worst type or kind. The Captain vents his spleen on his poor servant, Fag, for no offence of his. So reflecting on the injustice of such a conduct, he says that it is unjust to pour down one's anger upon an innocent person when one cannot give apt return to a stronger personality.

## ACT II. SCENE II

## (1) Analysis

(1) The maid-servant of Mrs. Malaprop, Lucy, is out on the North Parade (a walk at Bath) to deliver her mistress's love-letter to Sir Lucius who is deluded into thinking that these letters are really from "Delia" whom he takes to be Lydia, the rich heiress.

(2) Lucy reflects that a new rival to Lydia's existing lovers is now added in the person of Sir Lucius (who thinks 'Delia' to be Lydia), besides Acres and Beverley. Of these, Acres is out of the picture and may now be considered dismissed. She has plainly told Acres that Beverley is at the root of this dismissal by Mrs. Malaprop.

(3) Lucy thinks Sir Lucius is so late in coming up to the North Parade to receive this love-letter from her mistress. She is conscious of playing a wild prank on her mistress by letting Sir Lucius understand that the love-letters are from the young Lydia. She regrets this necessity for deception. It will not be to her interest to tell the Irish knight that his 'Delia' is not Lydia but really Mrs. Malaprop, an old Lady of fifty.

(4) At this stage, Sir Lucius puts in an appearance with an apology. He has been looking for her in the South Parade. For a while, however, he was in North Parade coffee-house where he fell into a short nap by the side of the window and consequently Lucy could not see him. He now receives the expected love-letter from Lucy. He opens it and as he reads it through, he finds that it is full of the love of the writer. Sir Lucius also reciprocates his love for her and amusingly calls his 'Delia' 'the queen of the dictionary.' Lucy puts in a remark at this stage saying that she (Delia) talks very warmly of him. In return, Sir Lucius asks Lucy to tell her that he will make the most affectionate husband to her, but he would rather seek her old aunt's consent to the intended marriage with 'Delia' in order that he may not have to lose her fortune by eloping with her. He then bribes Lucy by giving her some money and a few kisses in the bargain. To this latter gift (kisses), Lucy objects for two reasons. In the first place, kissing is immodest and an impudent behaviour on the part of a gentleman. Secondly, it can cause nothing but displeasure to her mistress if she comes to know of it somehow. Sir Lucius gives his opinion that modesty is a quality which is not praised by



women, though they seem to like it. He asks Lucy to tell her mistress that Sir Lucius kissed her fifty times. As he is going to give her more kisses, he sees Fag come upon the scene rather suddenly and leaves Lucy to herself.

(5) When Fag comes, he tells Lucy that he has seen her being kissed by Sir Lucius directly after she has handed over to him a letter, which, in all probability, must have been meant for his father. Now if his master somehow gets to know this, he is sure to challenge Sir Lucius in a duel or else he himself will. To leave no room for such a suspicion, Lucy has no other alternative than to give out her secrets : *e.g.*, (1) The love-letter comes from Mrs. Malaprop who has been keeping a secret correspondence with Sir Lucius under a false name. (2) Beverley has now to face a worse rival than Bob Acres in the person of Captain Absolute, who has been proposed by Sir Anthony to be married to Lydia. This latter is welcome news with which he now runs to inform his master of the happy coincidence that Lydia is the girl whom Sir Anthony has in mind in his proposal that Absolute should marry the girl of his choice.

### **(B) Dramatic Importance**

This scene, while resolving the first "crisis" of the preceding scene, creates another for the hero by involving him in fresh "complications."

The "conflict" between the son and the father, arose out of the question of the girl of the latter's choice. In the first scene, we have seen how they quarrelled over this question, the father insisting on his son's marrying a rich girl of his choice and how the son is determined not to give in *i. e.*, he is as firm on his resolution not to marry against his choice as ever. Fag now in this scene learns from Lucy that this lady of Sir Anthony's choice, is identically the same as Captain Absolute has been wooing under the name of Ensign Beverley. This important information resolves to ease and solve the 'conflict' between the father and son. Captain Absolute is now assured that he has no other rival in his love for Lydia. Thus this scene resolves the first 'crisis.'

When Bob Acres is dismissed by Mrs. Malaprop as a suitor for the hand of Lydia in marriage, the former thinks that one Beverley is behind the scene. So Bob Acres is egged on to send out a challenge to him by the Irish adventurer, Sir Lucius, as he fails in his foolishness to understand that, O'Trigger seeks to

remove both, he and the unknown Beverley from his path in order that he may at last hope to marry his 'Delia,' whom he is deceived into believing to be Lydia. A dismissed suitor and braggart like Bob Acres, cannot be expected to make the courtship of Lydia by Beverley alone. Hence we know from this scene that fresh trouble—another crisis—is developing for him. The immediate problem facing the hero, Captain Absolute, is to present himself in his true self before Lydia in order to bring her over to a more rational frame of mind in regard to their love-affair.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

1. **Another Rival**—*i. e.*, Captain Absolute, in addition to Bob Acres and Beverley. She will not enter his name in my list unless he has paid me fee as a go-between.

7. **Dear Delia**—The assumed romantic name of Lydia under which love-letters were exchanged. 12. **Ambadress**—go-between or medium through whom love-intrigues were exchanged between Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Lucius. 14. **The South Parade**—The public walk on the south side. 15. **O Gemini**—O my stars. 20. **I chose the window**—when I felt a bit sleepy, I chose a convenient corner by the side of the window so as not to miss you when you would come to look for me. 33-4. **A sudden.....love**—intensity of love at first sight. 37-39. **Female.....affections**—Being a woman she is prevented from giving a violent expression of her feelings of love for him in terms of language out of delicate considerations for her honour and modesty. 41. **a great mistress of language**—With great command over the language (ironically said). 42. **Queen of the dictionary**—words are ready to obey her commands to serve her regardless of appropriateness (ironically said). 44. **Though.....hearing**—the chances are that suitable words which are beyond the reach of her voice, cannot turn up in time ready at her back and call. The result is that only inappropriate words which have nothing to do with the sense, come ready to her call leading to awful misuse of words. 53. **Christendom**—the entire Christian world. 63. **I am.....action**—as he is at the moment poor in spite of his noble birth, he cannot afford to run away with the young lady, Lydia, thus losing all her fortune and doing the thing dishonestly. If he were rich, no one would have noticed his dishonourable conduct (elopement) but a poor man can never be excused. 67. **riband**—ribbon. 68. **hussy**—a pert girl. 69. **to put.....mind**—You have to call in the evening for a reply to this

letter. 70. **impudent**—shamelessly forward to kiss a woman without her consent. 72. **Faith she will**—she will certainly like me. 78. **Baggage**—a light-hearted woman. 86. **You.....us**—Fag charges Lucy with faithlessness because he has actually seen her handing over Mrs. Malaprop's letter to the Irish Knight. Fag thinks this letter to be meant for his master, who will challenge the Irishman to a duel, if he happens to know it. 104. **Cast down by**—feel saddened at heart by. 105. **Disconsolate**—disheartened.

### ACT III. SCENE I

#### (A) Analysis

(1) Captain Absolute has now the satisfaction to mature his future plans after having been informed that the girl whom his father insisted on his marrying, is identically the same girl, he has been courting as Ensign Beverley. (2) He decides to meet his father to offer unconditional submission to his will. Happily for himself, he finds his father coming that way. He is still in his worst mood of displeasure. The son now comes forward to offer his complete surrender to his father's will. The father is pleased with his son's submission. He now tells him that the girl of his choice is Lydia Languish, the niece of Mrs. Malaprop, whom his son has once seen in the country. Captain Absolute recalls that perhaps Miss Languish was the red-haired and squint-eyed girl he had once seen. All this, he says, of course, to disarm all suspicions of his father about the fact that she was the self-same girl he had been courting. The father now proceeds to describe in detail the physical charms of the girls to which Captain Absolute pretends to be indifferent. Sir Anthony is shocked at his son's coldness and calls him a hypocrite and a liar. Captain Absolute asks his father whether he is to marry the aunt or the niece. The father is furious at his son's insensibility. He recalls his own elopement with his mother for her beauty's sake. If his son does not get stark mad over his marriage with such a girl, the father himself will marry her.

#### (B) Dramatic Significance

We have already seen how the "conflict" of antagonistic forces as between the father and son over the question of the choice of a wife reached a stage in its development which brought about the first crisis of the action, the balance now begins to incline decisively to one or the other side after the turning-



point. This scene of reconciliation between the father and son, brings about a solution of the first "crisis" in the life of the hero, who offers unconditional but mock submission to the father's will. It is the pose—the pretence of not having previously known Lydia and of sensitivity to beauty and feminine charms that enlivenes the whole scene with wit and humour, through the brilliant dialogue. The son not only makes a pretence of not knowing anything about the physical charms of Lydia but also asks his father whether he is to marry the niece or the aunt at his bidding in a kind of anti-climax. It is this that makes the father recount the romance of his life in his youth in a kind of self-revelation. All this is extremely diverting. Sheridan's mastery of effective dramatic art is really amazing. The art of heightening by contrast the comic aspects of character has rarely been exhibited more amazingly than in the dialogues between Captain Absolute and his father, Sir Anthony.

#### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

1. **Whimsical enough, faith**—what a strange but happy coincidence that Lydia whom he loved and had been courting, was the very girl of his father's choice. 4—5. **He has.....matters**—his methods of getting things done, are indeed too peremptory and dogmatic. He will listen to no reason or argument to the contrary. 18. **Done with him**—sever all connections with him. **He's.....son**—He is as unrelated to me as anybody's son. 24. **Impudent scoundrel**—shameless villain. 28. **revolving**—thinking it over in his mind. 30. **condescension**—stoop down so low as to show kindness to inferiors. 37-38. When Captain Absolute totally surrenders to his father's will, Sir Anthony's temper cools down readily, though he is easily roused to a frenzy when provoked. 41. **Confound you**—a mild oath. 43. **Why then.....Jack**—Behind the rough exterior, Sir Anthony has in his nature a core of genuine love for his son and a consideration for others' feelings. 67. **innocently wild**—romantic and wild-looking eyes indicative of her innocence. **bashfully irresolute**—unsteadily rolling through a sense of modesty, being shy and nervous. 72. **pouting**—protruding lips forward in displeasure. 72-3. **More lovely etc.**—she looks lovelier when in ill-temper. **Sullenness**—expression of ill-temper. 80. **Fly like a rocket**—shoot up in a frenzy of excitement and enthusiasm. 81. **When.....an empire**—the father is surprised at what he calls the stupid insensibility of his son to beauty and recalls a bit

of his own experience in romantic love-making when he ran away with Absolute's mother without caring at all for wealth or property. The father goes to the length of confessing that he would have gladly given up an empire for woman's beauty and that an ugly woman was the last thing in the world, he could think of. 84-88. After his father's confession about the romantic love-making with Absolute's mother, the son roguishly places his father into an unpleasant situation when he puts to him a direct question *viz.*, if he would not marry even an ugly girl if his father chose the girl for him to get married with her. Taken off his guard, Sir Anthony declares that he would not take an ugly woman for his wife even if his father desired it but the very next moment he thinks that such a confession would give his son a handle. So he checks himself saying that it was quite another thing. 96. *graces*—beauties. (here the ugly aspects of physical beauty are hinted at ironically).

### ACT III. SCENE II

#### (A) Analysis

(1) As Faulkland waits anxiously for a meeting with Julia in her dressing-room, his mind is filled with doubts about the depth and sincerity of her love for him after having been told that she was quite happy, and that she sang, danced and mixed in company during their separation.

(2) When Julia enters, she complains of some coolness in him (in his looks) when they met little while ago in the presence of Sir Anthony. At first, Faulkland says he is really happy to see her but the very next moment his captious nature asserts itself when he recalls how she has had a nice time in Devonshire. He thinks himself, an ideally perfect lover and says that when lovers are separated they should shed tears of sorrow. At this, Julia assures him of her constant love for him. Moreover, she is grateful to him for having saved her life in a boat-disaster.

(3) But the idea of loving a person out of gratitude goes against Faulkland's theory of love, according to which true love can only be thought of for its own sake and not for anything else. Faulkland would not even be loved for his handsome features. At this, Julia says that she does not attach any importance to physical beauty. Although she has seen more handsome persons than Faulkland, yet she loves him sincerely. At this, Faulkland suggests that if she had truly loved him, she

ought to have regarded him fairer than anybody else on earth. He now reads to her a long lecture on his own conception of true love and shrewdly suggests that women often profess love for men for motives other than that of true love.

(4) At this, Julia loses all her patience; she now bursts into tears and leaves the room. Faulkland curses himself as a brute who jealously tortures a devoted and faithful girl. Julia is exasperated at the capricious jealousy of Faulkland. He imagines that Julia would come back but when at last she does not return, he resolves not to worry her anymore.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

The scene is considered by many critics to be a blemish in the play. It has nothing to do with the action of the main-plot which will not suffer, if it is entirely taken out. It concerns the sub-plot *viz.*, the Faulkland-Julia episode. Contemporary critics praised this scene but posterity has found nothing but fault in it, as it destroys the unity of impression of the whole drama and does not at all contribute to the progress of the main-plot. Faulkland is a true sentimentalist of the school generally condemned by Sheridan. He is a 'humour' character in whom jealousy is carried to comic exaggeration. He is really conceived by Sheridan in a spirit of genuine comedy. Sheridan in writing this scene, was not making a concession to sentimentalism but really framing an indictment. Sheridan has not been able to exclude sentiment altogether. As an anti-sentimental play-wright, he was so much influenced by the spirit of his age that even while professedly attacking sentimentalism, he could not completely avoid its tendencies. In this scene, Sheridan rather unguardedly lapses into the diction of Sentimental Drama.

The scene is important for suggesting the "conflict" between Julia and Faulkland, which will shortly develop into a "crisis" and for character-study by contrast as between Julia and Faulkland with the main protagonists of the main-plot *viz.*, Captain Absolute and Lydia.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

7. **Fretful**—complaining. **Madly capricious**—awfully or excessively whimsical. 11. **Though.....braiding**—According to Faulkland's romantic conception of himself, Julia's love for him cannot be sincere because of the report of Bob Acres that



Julia could afford to be jolly and gay during his absence. 12. **upbraiding**—fault-finding. 15. **nimbleness** etc.—quick and light steps. 20-21. **restrained** etc.—They could not give free vent to their love for each other in the presence of the third party (*i. e.*, Sir Anthony). 35. **Temper**—disposition. 35-39. Faulkland makes a grievance of the conduct of Julia in Devonshire where she was reportedly found by Bob Acres to be in high spirits, dancing, singing and making herself merry in company. He calls this kind of conduct as a virtual treachery. True lovers weep with tears of distress at their parting. These tears serve as a kind of mutual agreement or contract in terms of which they should have no joy till they meet again, united in love after separation. 40. **Cease to tax**—refrain from criticising. 41. **Idle reports**—fanciful descriptions and tearing etc.: the ungenerous habit of fault-finding with petty things. 42. **weigh.....breast**—affect your mind. **tried affection**—tested love. 50. **It were.....triumph**—Julia means to say that she were a look of happiness in company only to prove to people that she was happy in her love. Otherwise, if she were sad, malicious people would tend to suspect her happiness and conclude that Faulkland was faithless to her in her absence. “**For what.....you**—The seed for true love might be planted in the root of the heart, like “gratitude” in this particular case, as the originating cause but love is essential, something spontaneous and, as such, it does not depend on any exterior circumstance. 72-74. One should not set store by one’s beauty of person with which Nature has endowed one, for physical beauty does not constitute the true worth of man. **Vain article**—handsome features which make its possessor vain and egotistic. 77-79. Faulkland wants Julia to love him either for any mental quality or physical beauty. But she should consider him to be the fairest of all youngmen, even though they may be handsomer than him and he were as black as an Etheopean. This, according to him, is the measure of true love. 93-100. **So hasty** etc.—Faulkland has so long been harping on many faults with Julia’s love. As she attempts to satisfy him on one point by a reassuring reply, her reply is again given a wrong twist which offers him a fresh ground for dissatisfaction. He then comes to the secret source of his doubts and says that people who care for worldly advantage, may not be said to have loved in the real sense. Women often tend to think that considerations of prudence, gratitude, duty etc. are worthy motives of true love. No-

thing can be further from the truth. 100-104. This is Faulkland's thesis ; women more often than not mistake consideration of prudence, gratitude, duty etc. as worthy motives of true love. He now wants to be dead certain that Julia does not love him for all these considerations but for himself alone. Julia feels herself insulted at this and bursts into tears. 101. *separate...affections*—go to the very roots of love. 103. *pleadings of the heart*—the urge or solicitations of love. 110. *insinuations*—introduce gradually and subtly. 118. *resolution*—strength of will and purpose. 133. *antique virago*—an old, turbulent, quarrelsome woman. *spleen*—ill-temper.

### ACT III. SCENE III

#### (A) Analysis

(1) Armed with a letter of introduction to Mrs. Malaprop from his father, Captain Absolute calls on her. The Captain now pays mock-compliments for her intellectual accomplishments, learning, polite manners and physical beauty. She feels herself much flattered. She laments, men are far more attracted towards the physical beauty of women than to learning to which she attaches so much importance.

(2) Mrs. Malaprop now talks about her niece's foolish infatuation for poor Ensign Beverley. She hands over to Absolute a love-letter from Beverley, intercepted by her and hands it over to Captain Absolute who at once understands that it is the one written by him to Lydia and that Lucy must have betrayed him. Absolute now proceeds to read his own letter through punctuating the reading with his comments on its writer. The letter talks about Lydia being his soul's idol and his apprehensions about the selling up of a new lover for Lydia who is an accomplished gentleman. Mrs. Malaprop is described as an old, weather-beaten she-dragon, jealously guarding over her niece whom the writer hopes to elude. He calls her a vain self-important woman who makes herself ridiculous by her muddle-headed use of learned words, the meaning of which she does not understand. At this stage of the reading, Mrs. Malaprop takes serious exception to the fellow's impudence and resolves to foil his plans for further progress in love-making.

(3) Captain Absolute now very ingeniously persuades Mrs. Malaprop to agree to his secret meeting with Lydia so that he may succeed in discomfiting the youngman (Beverley) in the nick of time by upsetting the latter's plan for elopement with



Lydia. He wants Mrs. Malaprop to tell Lydia that her Beverley has come to see her so that she may not refuse to see him. She agrees since it will be a good joke. Mrs. Malaprop rises to go and send her down.

(4) Captain Absolute is now left alone with Lydia. At first, Lydia is in a complaining mood. It will be a torture to her to be forced to listen to a stranger while her heart is already given to another. She thinks, she will appeal to the generosity of the stranger to leave her free to pursue her love. But as she turns round to tell the stranger about this, she is, surprised to be confronted with her own Beverley. She wonders how he could possibly gain admission into the house with her aunt's consent. Captain Absolute explains that somehow he has supplanted his rival, knowing beforehand that the Captain was to visit her, and is to impersonate him. Lydia is highly pleased at the deception practised on her aunt and wants to implement her plan of elopement, if he will only agree to forego her dowry. At this, Absolute promptly assures her that her beauty and love are all the dowry he values. Lydia reciprocates her love for her Beverley and rejoices at the prospect of enjoying the blessings of poverty with her lover. Absolute returns the sentiment and embraces Lydia, who is in raptures at the prospect of their impending elopement. Now all the time, Mrs. Malaprop has been overhearing their conversation in order to watch Lydia's reaction to Captain Absolute. Mrs. Malaprop overhears Lydia, saying that Beverley is ever her's, in spite of the choice of her aunt, falling on Captain Absolute. From this she is cheated into believing that her niece is evidently angry with her new suitor. When she finds Absolute kneeling to her, she can no longer control her temper. She comes out of her place of hiding and charges Lydia with insulting the youngman, Captain Absolute to whom she appologises for her niece's insulting behaviour. Absolute pretends not to mind anything at all and hopes to succeed in future. The scene ends with Lydia still affirming her faith in her lover, Beverley, and Mrs. Malaprop threatening to choke her words in her throat.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene presents a "near crisis" in the love-relations between Lydia and Captain Absolute. We have seen how the "conflict" between the father and son, in respect of the former's choice of a wife, was resolved by the revelation that the girl his father insisted on his marrying was no other than Lydia



whom he loved. But the problem of the revelation of his own identity to Lydia still remained. This constitutes the "final crisis" in the way of his happy and successful marriage with Lydia. This comes to a head in Act IV. Scene II, where his identity is finally revealed and Lydia flies into a temper as she cries out, "Be assured, I throw the original from my heart."

The scene is also one of the most diverting and interesting scenes of the play, presented in the first interview between Captain Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop. It also throws an interesting side-light on the character of the main protagonists *viz.*, (1) Mrs. Malaprop's meanness in her interception of a love-letter meant for her niece, the coarseness of her character and lack of a sense of humour. (2) Absolute is a good judge of character. His strong sense of humour makes us see and enjoy the follies and foibles of the characters he has to deal with. (3) The romantic obsessions of Lydia with her plan of elopement and run-away marriages and her sentimental conception of a life wedded to poverty are also brought out clearly in this scene.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

7. **Principal inducement etc.**—marriage with Lydia constitutes his chief attraction in life. 8. **Being allied etc.**—The opportunity of being related to you through marriage with Miss Lydia has induced me to accept this proposal, for which I seek your permission to see her. 9. **accomplishments**—attainments. **unaffected learnings**—the possession of so much learning has not rendered her vain and egotistic. 15-16. It is really a pity that men should attach far more importance to a woman's physical beauty than to her learning, which, by itself, constitutes a special charm. 22. **Few.....at once**—Few women show both the flower and the fruit at the same time *i. e.*, the twin blessings of physical beauty (flower) and learning (fruit), which Mrs. Malaprop has, like the proverbial orange-tree, with blossoms on some of its branches and fruits in others. **Specious**—attractive. **Blossom**—physical beauty in young women. 28. **Eves-dropping**—standing near the lover's door to hear him or her talk. 30. **Silly affair**—the foolish love-affair between Lydia and Ensign Beverley. 47. **The little traitress**—the faithless betrayer, Lucy—the medium through whom love-intrigues are carried on between Beverley and Lydia—between Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Lucius. After the betrayal, she drops out of the

drama altogether. 54. **tender**—Loving. 55. **Profane**—irreverent. **O'my conscience**—I say so truly. 64. **I'll answer for him**—I am ready to admit in his behalf. 66. **The old.....you**—Mrs. Malaprop is a veritable dragon, keeping an eternal watch over the treasure (female chastity) like the mythical dragon of old. Like a typical old aunt, jealous in her guard over her niece, she thinks that it is her duty to be ever watchful and her duty to keep the young niece under continual restraint. What is most amusing is that she is proud of her watchfulness at the very moment she is being pitifully deceived by the very youngman who wrote the letters intercepted by her from Lucy. 70. **Impudent scoundrel**—Shameless villain. 71. **elude etc.**—give her the slip. 72-73 **Which.....features**—She adorns her person and hides her ugly appearances with costly dress and by this means she is trying desperately to live up to the elegant standards of the town-belle and behave like fashionable town-ladies. Note this important point of Mrs. Malaprop's character. 75. **an attack etc.**—which is worse than an attack upon her features. 75-79. **there is.....epitaphs**—Captain Absolute figuring as Ensign Beverley, now comes to that part of his own love-letter to Lydia, where he touches on the "malapropism" of Mrs. Malaprop *i. e.*, her muddle-headed and accurate use of learned words—high-sounding classical words. This is a charge that hurts her much. If she values anything in this world, it is her understanding of her "vernacular" language and her nice arrangement of expressions in words. Surely, this is the unkindest out of all. **aspersion**—calumny. **reprehend**—she means comprehend or value. **oracular**—she means vernacular. **epitaphs**—memorials; It is here the major expressions in words. 87. **Go between**—intermediary. 88. **Assurance**—impudence. 89-91. An example of "unconscious" dramatic irony. Mrs. Malaprop seems to be plotting against the Ensign, exactly as he wished her to do and is completely cheated. 99. **contrive etc.**—elope with her myself instead of allowing her to do the same with Beverley. 105. **decorum**—social formalities. 125. **She.....her**—she thinks that she is right to compel her ward, Lydia to see Captain Absolute and not Ensign Beverley. 130. **Loathsome addresses**—bateful expressions of love. **Stranger etc.**—stranger with whom I am not in love. 161. **trifle with**—use unwisely. 164. **rescue etc.**—reminiscent of Sheridan's own elopement with Miss Linley thereby rescuing her from her persecuting suitors. 169-172. This is how Absolute goes into

raptures and conjures up before Lydia a vision of their love-life in the midst of poverty. He wants that there could hardly be any better dowry to the wedded pair than love. **Dower**—portion, dowry or money. 177. **monastic strictness**—with that spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice with which monks or nun are imbued in the life of strict discipline led by them in monasteries. 178-9. **proud of calamity**—It will make us all the more proud when we shall console ourselves with the thought that all the hardships of life arose out of sacrifice for love. 180-81. **Surrounding.....bright**—The very fact that we courted poverty will make the sincerity of our love all the greater. 182. **all...fortune**—wealth and property that can be counted among riches. 190. **deports herself**—conducts herself in the interview with Captain Absolute. 235. **what.....fixed**—what we have decided earlier among ourselves.

### ACT III. SCENE IV

#### (A) Analysis

1. Bob Acres, the foolish country-squire, has by now given up his country-dress, which he considers to be responsible for his ill-success in his love-venture. He is trying to get his hair curled and to get up correctly fashionable in French dances. He has decorated his person with the fashionable dress of a city-beau. All this has excited the wonder and admiration of his devoted servant, David, who thinks that his master has now changed so much that even his mother, not to speak of the butler, the maid-servant and his favourite bitch—will not be able to recognise him. David slyly suggests that caricature-prints of his master may be sold in the open market as “Devon Macaroni” *i. e.*, a typical fashionable gallant from Devonshire. Bob Acres feels himself highly flattered by these compliments, and sends David to call his French dancing-master to help him in rubbing up his practice in dancing.

2. Sir Lucius ‘O Trigger now puts in an appearance. Acres explains to him all his woes and worries since his arrival in town. He came to Bath in pursuit of his love-affair with Lydia. He changed his country-dress of a fox-hunting squire with this object in view. But in spite of this he has been lately dismissed in favour of another suitor, Ensign Beverley. Sir Lucius has a remedy to suggest *viz.*, fighting duel with Beverley even though the wearing of swords in public is strictly forbidden. He explains that rivalry in love is enough provocation



since his honour is involved at this kind of insulting behaviour from Beverley, even though his rival is not known to him personally. The foolish Acres is convinced. He agrees to fight it out with Beverley. He decides to challenge his adversary, Beverley, to a duel that very evening in the King's Mead-fields on the western side of the city. He writes out the letter of challenge, Sir Lucius dictating to him the actual text in the most polite language possible—Sir Lucius says he himself might have carried the letter of challenge but, as he has quarrelled with another gentleman (Captain Absolute) whom he has challenged to a duel for making certain remarks about Irishmen, he has to meet him on the duel-ground that very evening. Acres, like the coward that he is, now wishes that Sir Lucius should set an example first by killing his adversary so that it may serve as a lesson on the art of fighting. Sir Lucius agrees to do this and leaves his friend after giving him certain instructions to do everything politely like a gentleman.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

'Complication' is that part of a play in which the 'conflict' continues to rise in intensity while the outcome remains uncertain. This 'complication' is the outcome of the 'conflict' in the relations between Captain Absolute and Lydia, is provided in this scene by Acres agreeing to fight Beverley by whom he is cut out from carrying on his love-affair with Lydia. Another challenge is posed by Sir Lucius offering to fight Captain Absolute for certain insulting remarks made by the latter about Irishmen.

The scene also brings into bold relief certain features in the characters of Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger viz., the foolish attempt of the country-squire. Acres at changing into the fashionable dress of a city-beau to ingratiate himself into the favour of his lady-love under the assumption that "dress does make a difference" and the fighting propensity of that veteran duellist ("The blood-thirsty Philistine") Sir Lucius, with whom the fighting of duels is a sort of "pastime."

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

2-4. **You.....Bath**—David, the personal servant of Bob Acres, is full of admiration for his master's fashionable dress. He compliments his master on his improved appearance and slyly suggests that very soon his picture will be put up for sale in the print-shops of Bath as "a typical fop of Devonshire."

'Macaroni' is the contemporary name for 'fops.' "It was customary to have caricatures of well-known macaronis on sale in the print-shops." (Herring)

17. **Dolly Tester**—The name of Acres's favourite horse.  
 12. **Oons**—Zounds (God's wounds)—an oath. 13. **But..... bark**—The dogs will start barking not being able to recognise their master. 28. **Minuet**—a kind of slow dance. 30. **Od's... tabors**—favourite oaths of Acres; 'jig' is a lively form of dancing whereas 'tabour' is a small drum accompanying a pipe. 33. **outlandish**—foreign. **heathen**—uncultured. 33-39. **Allemandes**—German dances of moderate rapidity, adopted by the French. **Cotillions**—French dances of an elegant but intricate style. **Cursed**—accursed, vicious. **Lingo**—vocabulary in use in particular subjects. **Anti-Gullican**—against everything French. **Note**—Thinking that he would like to rub up his practice in French dancing, Acres sends away his servant to call the dancing-master and then starts practising these foreign dances for which he thinks that his English legs are quite unaccustomed in their habits of movement. 46-49. Explaining his woes at Bath, Acres says that the god of Love tempted him with the false hope of winning his lady-love, Lydia but he is unfortunately landed in a quagmire as he feels that he is ousted by his rival, Beverley. 60. **Od's.....lies**—Acres apprehends, he is cut out by Beverley by means of lies and slanders, thereby putting him into disfavour with his lady-love, Lydia.

105-108. Sir Lucius now realises that Acres is a rival in his love for Lydia (who is his dear 'Delia'), so he now wants to remove both him and Beverley from his path. The coward Acres swaggers in his usual manner by means of bullets and guns and pretends to be much excited at the prospect of his duel with Beverley.

#### ACT IV. SCENE I

##### (A) Analysis

(1) David, the devoted personal servant of Acres, has heard reports of his master's impending duel with somebody at the instigation of the blood-thirsty, Sir Lucius. So he tries his best to dissuade his master from the use of sword and pistol which would surely mean his death. He knows it to be dead certain that his master will never succeed in a duel against his rival, some 'lion-headed fellow.' He curses Sir Lucius who, he thinks, is at the root of all evil. He is afraid that his master has

not got the ghost of the chance of a success in any encounter.

(2) Bob Acres says that it is all a question of saving his honour and family-prestige. Surely one should always be prepared to endanger one's life, if need be for the sake of honour and for the prestige of his family-ancestors who would be otherwise disgraced. David retorts that honour is a false friend who could save the life of the man in danger, for if the man himself is killed, there would be nobody left to enjoy that honour except the enemy. Acres says that surely he cannot disgrace his ancestors by dishonourable action. To this, David gives a prompt answer *viz.*, that he would not like to join his ancestors now in the other world with a bullet on his head. At this, Acres calls his servant a coward but at the same time enquires if fighting a duel involves any very great risk to one's life. David, who has little faith in his master's courage and fighting capacity, says that he is almost sure that his master will get killed, in a duel with pistols and swords. Acres, however, puts up a show of anger at his servant's cowardice and vows that he is determined to fight. He takes out the letter of challenge which he wants to hand over to his friend, Captain Absolute with the request to deliver it to Beverley whom he does not happen to know. David would not touch this letter which he thinks is as dangerous as a pouch of gun-powder. David, now begins to lament how the news of his master's death will be received by his people at home. Even the very animals at his country-house will mourn for his death. All this is too much for Acres who now sends his servant so that he may talk things over with Captain Absolute who has come to see him on business having been asked by Acres.

(3) Amidst his swaggerings in the name of St. George and the dragon, Acres hands over to Captain Absolute the letter of challenge which he is to transmit to Beverley. Absolute is highly amused at the thought and assures him that he will do his friends this little service. Acres wants him to act as his second in the duel but the latter declines to accept this honour, since he is Beverley himself and suggests the name of Sir Lucius. At this stage, a servant comes with the news that Captain Absolute is wanted by his father. As Absolute is about to leave, Acres asks him to try his best to frighten his enemy (Beverley) by giving him a description of his courage and fighting capacity in such glowing terms that he may be dissuaded from fighting with him. Absolute is highly amused at this swagger-



ing of Acres and promises to tell Beverley that 'fighting Bob' is in mighty rage this time,

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene illustrates the important part played by the minor characters in the development of the plot. They not only contribute to the spirit of fun and mirth of the comedy by their wit and rogueries in the various situations of the drama but also help in the development of the plot, the progress of the action, besides providing the necessary background of the play. Here the minor character concerned is David, servant of Acres. In a previous scene, we have already seen him commenting slyly on his master's foolish attempt at transforming himself into a city-beau in a predominantly farcical situation. In this scene, we find David desperately trying his best to dissuade his master from the use of the sword and pistol in the impending duel—It may be noted that the comedic winding up of the drama is, in no small measure, due to the intervention of the two servants, Fag and David.

The scene also brings into clear relief some of the traits in the character of the two protagonists viz., Bob Acres and Captain Absolute, and the servant of the former *i. e.*, David.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

1. **No such thing**—referring to his master's reported intention of fighting a duel. 8. **Not be etc.**—In spite of Sir Lucius's incitements, he would never have allowed himself to be carried off his feet so easily as his master, who is so easily egged on to send out a challenge by that intriguing Irish adventurer. Sir Lucius, whose appetite for mischief seems to be as insatiable as the sea-bird 'cormorant' for food. 11-12. **Sharps and snakes**—Swords and pistols. 19. **Risk.....honour**—No gentleman would like to do anything that may put his honour in danger. 21-23. **a false friend**—Honour is, to David, a false friend as for its sake a man runs the risk of losing his life even. 39-45. **Under favour.....with**—According to David, the best way of not disgracing one's ancestors is not to join them as early as one can with a lead bullet in the head but to live as long as one can on this earth. **Under favour**—if you be pleased to have my opinion on the matter under dispute. 49-57. When Acres comforts himself with the thought that after all a duel may not always involve the loss of life, David says that a duel with double-barrelled pistols and cut and thrust swords invariably

ends fatally for one of the fighters and that there is little chance of his master's killing his rival. 63-64. **Would 'nt.....stable**—I would not help you to fight a duel even if you agree to give me your best horse. 69. **Poltroon**—coward. 72. **Clod Hall**—Acres's country-residence. 88-9. This is how Acres puts up a false show of courage before Captain Absolute who was asked to see him for delivering the letter of challenge to Beverley. He gives himself the airs of a fearless dare-devil gifted by Nature with the courage of St. George, the patron-saint of England, who killed the dragon. St. George is represented in mediaeval art and legends as a knight killing a dragon (a fabulous snake-like creature with wings and scapes and a fire-breathing tongue from the back of his horse).

#### ACT IV. SCENE II

##### (A) Analysis

(1) Mrs. Malaprop is taking Lydia to task for her obstinacy in refusing to accept the addresses of Absolute, whose gentle manners and fine figure are really worthy of praise. Lydia enjoys her aunt's mistake. She thinks her aunt is mistaking Beverley for Absolute. Lydia does not seem, however, to know that it is she herself who has really been deceived into believing that it was her Beverley and not Captain Absolute who came to see her. Lydia is amused to think that her aunt would be very angry when she discovers her mistake that it is Beverley whom she has seen and whom she is praising so highly.

(2) Sir Anthony and her son, Captain Absolute now call on Mrs. Malaprop. Before they are admitted, Mrs. Malaprop warns Lydia to behave herself properly towards Captain Absolute, the new suitor. But Lydia refuses to look at the new suitor, not to speak of receiving his addresses. Sir Anthony has had great difficulty in inducing his son to come. He hopes Lydia is convinced of the worth of his son who would certainly make a good husband in view of his relationship with a baronet. He calls upon his son to start addressing her but the latter feels rather shy and requests her father to leave them alone. On the other hand, Mrs. Malaprop has also been requesting her niece to talk to Captain Absolute, while Lydia has been wondering why her aunt does not discover her blunder in having mistaken Beverley for Captain Absolute presumably because of the similar dress as a soldier. In this way both the guardians continue to request their wards to speak but they keep silent.

(3) When at last Absolute is compelled to speak by his father, he begins his addresses to Lydia in a low gruff tone lest Lydia should happen to recognise his voice as that of Beverley. Sir Anthony calls upon his son to speak clearly at the same time requesting Mrs. Malaprop to ask Lydia to show them honour by turning her face. Thus compelled by his father, Absolute now addresses Lydia directly in which the latter immediately recognises her Beverley's voice in the youngman. It is now the turn of the two guardians to be confounded. Absolute is caught in his deception—to Lydia, his father and Mrs. Malaprop. They are all convinced that the Captain has been playing tricks on them all. The two guardians are now left wondering how Lydia can call Absolute her Beverley. Lydia feels frustrated that all her romantic dreams are now at an end. Mrs. Malaprop now sees that it is the young Captain who is the author of the letter in which he describes him as a she-dragon. However, the two guardians agree to forgive and forget, leaving the two lovers alone to adjust and compose their difference.

(4) Left alone, the two young persons are, indeed, in a difficult position. Lydia is wild with anger at the deception practised on her so long by Captain Absolute in the disguise of Beverley and at the frustration of her romantic plan of elopement. She angrily flings a miniature-picture of Beverley, she has so long been keeping in her bosom as a keep-sake to symbolise her renouncement of Beverley. Captain Absolute also stiffens his attitude toward her. In his turn, he too takes out a picture of Lydia and starts describing the romantic smile on the face and all the rest of it, saying that he will now value the picture as a memento of his great love for its original. At this, Lydia softens a little but blames Absolute for the whole trouble. Captain Absolute now stiffens a little more than ever before and says that he may now take it that all is now ended between them. At this, Lydia bursts into tears.

(5) The two guardians who now enter on the scene, are surprised to see Lydia in tears. They blame Captain Absolute for this. Sir Anthony leaves requesting Mrs. Malaprop to make his son's peace with the girl.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

Every dramatic story sooner or later reaches a stage in its development at which the balance begins to incline decisively



to one or the other side. This is the turning point or "crisis" followed by "denouncement" comprising that part of the play in which the stages in the movement of events towards this success, are worked out in a "conclusion."

This scene presents the most serious "crisis" in the main-plot of the drama. We have already seen in Act II. Scene I, the "first crisis" in the love-affairs of Captain Absolute—the hero. There Sir Anthony forced upon his son a lady of his own choice and the son does not yet know that his Lydia is the choice of his father. Latterly, Captain Absolute learnt from Fag that the lady whom Sir Anthony wanted to force upon him, was the same he was wooing under the sham name of Beverley. This latter information lightened the crisis a little but the problem still remained unsolved *viz.*, how he was to present himself in his true self before Lydia. We have already seen how, in first interview with Lydia (Act III. Scene III), Captain Absolute managed to dupe Lydia into believing that he was no Absolute but that he had thrown dust into the eyes of Mrs. Malaprop by personating Captain Absolute.

This scene presents the greatest "crisis" in the love-affairs of Captain Absolute as here his real self is laid bare before Lydia when the latter finally dismisses him as a lover and throws away his portrait. Besides presenting this crisis in the love-life of our hero, the scene also helps in keeping up suspense in the mind of the audience. It also suggests further "complications" to be resolved in the duel-scene which is to follow in the final happy ending.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

3. A pretty.....man—handsome in his physical appearance.
4. She.....praising—Lydia enjoys her aunt's mistaking Beverley for Absolute, without knowing that it is she herself who has been duped into thinking that it was her Beverley and not Captain Absolute who comes to see her. As a matter of fact, it was Lydia herself who was wrong.
10. Well-bred—brought up in a cultured family.
- 12-18. Mrs. Malaprop thought that Lydia rejected the love of Absolute (from the last sentence uttered by Lydia) while Mrs. Malaprop was eaves-dropping *viz.*, "Let her (Mrs. Malaprop's) choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine." So in this scene, Mrs. Malaprop takes her niece to task for rejecting Absolute's offer knowing, as he did, his good breeding, his manner of talk, handsome appearance

and all the rest of it, which reminded her of Hamlet's description of the figure of his father. 15. **Hesperion**—Hyperion, the sun-god. **Job**—a Jewish patriarch mentioned in the Bible, who had eyes like those of Mars, the war-god in classical mythology whom Mrs. Malaprop confuses with the word, 'March.' 16. **Threaten at command**—Mars, the god of War, could threaten or command by a mere nod of his head. **Station**—posture. 11. **Harry mercury**—The herald or the divine messenger Mercury in Greek mythology. 18. **Similitude**—The similarity or rather the parallel between the youngman's appearance and that of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's play of that name. Notice the many blunders and meaningless perversions of Shakespeare's language in Mrs. Malaprop's speech. 31-32. Sir Anthony complains that he had much difficulty in persuading his son to come. This was quite natural on the part of Absolute lest he should be found out by Lydia and her guardian. 40. **My appliance**—Her relationship with Sir Anthony after the intended marriage as between his son and Lydia will enhance the dignity and prestige, attaching to the family of a baronet. 48. **regimentals**—army uniforms. 56. **Why don't you etc.**—When asked to speak to Lydia by his father, Absolute is in a fix, for if he spoke in his own character, his offer would be refused by Lydia. 69. **Confounded**—confused. 70. **Tremor**—thrill of emotion. 78. **Heaven send**—may God so wish. 79. **disguise.....voice**—Having been compelled to speak by his father, Absolute has to assume a low, gruff tone lest Lydia should recognise his choice to be that of Ensign Beverley. 83. **What the devil etc.**—Sir Anthony can find no rational explanation for his son's voice suddenly assuming a low rough tone. 84. **Quinsy**—tonsillitis. 89-90. **I wish.....side front**—Sir Anthony asks Lydia to show them honour by looking at their face to face and by turning her face and not show a side only. 117. **who.....you**—Both Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop wonder how Lydia can call Absolute her Beverley. The latter supposes that perhaps Lydia's romantic head has got muddled and she sees Beverley in her new suitor. Lydia recognises Absolute as her own Beverley when Absolute is at last compelled by his father to speak in his own natural voice, not in a broken gruff tone. Sir Anthony considers Lydia to be as mad as any stark-mad person in the lunatic asylum. He goes to the length of doubting the identity of his son—"Is he really his son Absolute or some one else passing himself off as Absolute," he now demands to know. 142. **Varlet**—rascal. 148. **dissembling villain**—



pretending rogue. 147-53. etc.—Sir Anthony calls his son an impudent fellow who has deceived him so nicely with a definite assurance of obedience and submission to his will by pretending to fall in with his father's wish in respect of his choice of a wife for him. 154 66. **Oh, Lud.....speech**—These lines explain the reaction of the revelation by Absolute *viz.*, he courted Lydia as a poor Ensign in order to satisfy her romantic fancy, *i. e.*, on Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop. This disclosure satisfies the ever-jolly, happy-go-lucky Sir Anthony when he understands that his son is not a dull unfeeling youth as he pretended to be. Mrs. Malaprop bursts forth at the discovery that it was the young Captain who was the author of these letters in which she is described as a 'she dragon.' **Zounds**—God's wounds, an oath in the name of the crucifixion of Christ. **Oddest**—strangest and most singular. **Billing and cooing**—exchanging kisses. 165-66. **So clever a turn**—such an interesting development of events. When Absolute appeals to his father to come to his rescue at this juncture and unpleasant situation, Sir Anthony is only too glad to overlook his son's rogueries and requests Malaprop to foregive and forget. His son's action is so romantic that he cannot but feel happy and enthused about it. 174. The old gentleman forgets all sense of propriety or decorum when he reflects on Lydia's beauty. He repeats to his son the descriptions of the beauty and charms of the girl and starts singing. 184. **Sir**—"A rebuke for calling her by her Christian name—Lydia." (Herring). 204. **I resign the rest**—I withdraw my claim to marry you. 207-8. **unmanly imposition**—fraud unworthy of a man, referring to Absolute's assumption of the name of Beverley without her knowledge. 210. **Humouring my romance**—satisfying my romantic whims. 220. **Miniature**—very small picture worn in the pendants of lockets etc. 246. **There's.....insolence**—Lydia, the spoilt child of fortune is getting the first shock of her life when she is thus stripped of her sentimental conception of life by Absolute. But her love for Beverley is genuine, although she jilts him as Captain Absolute after throwing off his picture from within her blouse. 260-6. On their return, the two guardians (Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop) are surprised to hear the angry outburst of Lydia at Absolute that the latter is ungrateful and treacherous. Both suspect that possibly Absolute is personating a third character through which he is playing a new trick of deception on the poor girl, and is a three-faced devil like the



three-headed dog Cerberus guarding the entrance to Hades, the under-world over which Pluto rules.

### ACT IV. SCENE III

#### (A) Analysis

(1) Sir Lucius is walking along the North Parade in the expectation of meeting Absolute who, he thinks has offended him by his candidature for the hand of Lydia in marriage. Consequently, Sir Lucius wants to remove Absolute from his path by killing him in a duel that very evening. He cannot understand why young girls feel so attracted to these red coat soldiers with whom they, not unoften, elope. While thinking thus, he comes across, sees Captain Absolute passing by that way. So he slinks aside so as to be able to hear what he is muttering to himself in a very sulky mood. Absolute is grumbling in a desperate mood against the absurd attitude taken up by Lydia whom he has failed to win over in spite of his plottings and schemings. He feels so depressed that he almost feels like killing somebody or get himself killed. Sir Lucius is glad to find his enemy-rival in love—in such a temper and seeks to pick up a quarrel with him in a genteel fashion on the ground that he has difference in opinion from the Captain reminding him at the same time that he has of late given him an affront for which Sir Lucius wants to fight a duel with him. Captain Absolute retorts that he has given no opinion and that since he has uttered no thoughts, least of all expressed them, there cannot be any ground for a quarrel. Sir Lucius says in reply that mere thinking of an untruth is enough for a quarrel. Seeing that Sir Lucius is bent upon a quarrel, Absolute takes up the challenge and they agree to fight with small swords at King's Mead-fields that evening.

(2) Hardly has Sir Lucius left, when Faulkland enters on the scene to meet his friend, Captain Absolute in the worst humour of his life. Each disburdens the tale of his failures and disappointment over his lady-love to the other. Absolute tells Faulkland that he has been challenged in a duel by Sir Lucius. He now wants Faulkland to act as his second in the duel but the latter pleads that he is much worried over his quarrel with Julia and curses himself for having tortured a devoted and faithful girl. At this stage, a servant comes in with a letter from Julia to Faulkland, asking him to meet her

as soon as possible. But Faulkland does not seem to be very happy at Julia's initiative in bringing about a reconciliation between them which throws his mind into a state of doubt of her constancy in love for him. Absolute upbraids Faulkland for his incorrigible capriciousness. He contrasts himself with this friend, and thinks of his hard lot. The idea of being Absolute's second in his duel with Sir Lucius suggests to him a plan for testing Julia's constancy in love for him. He will fabricate a story to the effect that he has killed someone in a duel. He will be able to test Julia's sincerity and devotion by this means.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene presents a climax or crisis in the affairs of the hero and a further complication, leading to a final crisis and followed by a final happy denouement in the last scene of the Fifth Act. Besides this, it links up the main-plot with the subsidiary plot (Julia-Faulkland episode) in two ways: (a) it brings Faulkland to the place of this duel as Captain Absolute's second and (b) it gives Faulkland an idea from the challenge of Sir Lucius to his friend, Captain Absolute *viz.*, he will concoct the story of having killed someone in a duel for which he is under the necessity of flying from England, in order to put Julia to a further test on her constancy in love for him. This latter is a fresh 'complication' in the Julia-Faulkland episode with a further 'crisis' in their love-affair, making the whole plot still more involved and putting off a happy solution of the two love-intrigues as far off as ever.

The Scene advances the action of the main-plot well as the sub plot and integrates them into a common pattern. Both the heroes of the two plots are in a 'crisis' which threatens to undo them at any moment. Absolute in the person of Beverley has already been challenged to a duel with Bob Acres in a previous scene. He is again challenged to a duel by Sir Lucius in this scene. After being jilted by Lydia, he has never been in a worse mood than before to when he is challenged in a mood in which he felt like killing people or getting himself killed. He has failed to prick the romantic bubble in Lydia who has proved herself as obdurate as ever. He has to fight two duels—one with Bob Acres in the person of Beverley and another one with Sir Lucius. Even if he succeeds in these duels, the chances are that Lydia will continue to hug her romantic illusion as clearly as before. He has deceived three

persons all to no purpose *viz.*, Lydia, Mrs. Malaprop and his father and the upshot of all these deceptions and impersonations has launched him no nearer the goal of his life *viz.*, a happy marriage with Lydia.

### Notes, Explanations, References etc.

2. **These Officers etc.**—Sir Lucius, a civilian, complains against military offices. He wonders why young ladies are attracted to military men. Women are like vipers, in that they tend to rush rather thoughtlessly at a piece of red cloth. Sir Lucius had a similar bitter experience like the present one, in which another military officer whisked off the lady of his heart before she had an opportunity to see him. Cf. Bathsheba in love with Serjeant Troy cutting out Gabriel Oak in Hardy's "Far from a Madding Crowd." A bit.....cloth—"Vipers are said to attack a piece of red cloth with such fury that they expend all their venom on it and can then be handled without danger." (Balston)

11—12. **This.....provoking**—The fact that there is every likelihood of Absolute's success in his love-suit is very annoying to me. 13. **To.....plotting**—All his precious plans, tricks and deceptions with Lydia have failed. 16. **So damned absurd**—So obsessed was Lydia with her romantic illusions that she forgot all her love for me. 17. **Worse humour**—bad mood ; depressed and melancholy. So that he feels like killing or get killed. In this mood he readily accepted Sir Lucius's challenge without rhyme or reason. 22. **In the nick**—at the most opportune moment when he is in a bad temper. 27—28. Sir Lucius's point is this : the mere act of cherishing a false opinion in one's mind is a ground enough for a quarrel, even if one does not give expression to it, whereas Absolute's point is that a thought unless expressed in terms of language, can hardly be disputed. Sheridan's idea is to show how duels in those days used to be fought over trifles or no reason at all. 44—45. **Balk your inclinations**—Thwart you in your desire to fight. 57. **ill-breeding**—bad manners. 59. **pother**—fuss. 53—55. Two charges are preferred against Absolute ; (1) Absolute differed in opinion with him at least in thought if not in actual words ; (2) Absolute once made insulting remarks about him. Seeing that Sir Lucius was determined to have the duel, Absolute takes up the challenge in sheer apathy and desperation, brought about as a result of the jilting by Lydia. He chooses the Spring Gardens as the venue of the



duel as this place is usually unfrequented in the evening. 79. **Just.....squints**—Lydia's sense of duty and her natural affection all incline towards the same person in the same way as the eyes of a squint-eyed person. 81. **Obliged**—turned the other way. 79-83. **An.....frown**—Faulkland who knows how his friend, Absolute met Lydia in his own person, thinks that Lydia is certainly glad to see that her duty of obedience to her guardian (Mrs. Malaprop) and her inclination have coincided and point to one man. Absolute humourously points out that Lydia's love and her sense of duty behave somewhat like the eyes of a squint-eyed person. So long as her love-eye *i. e.*, that part of her self which made her fall in love with Beverley, is fixed upon Absolute as her Beverley, the other eye *i. e.*, that part of her self which told her to be dutiful, was nicely turned aside from duty. **The same way**—*i. e.*, to take the person chosen by her guardian as the person she is to love. **Swirl**—whirl as in a eddy. **Secured its retreat**—Vanished altogether. 110-11. Faulkland knows that he is irrationally jealous and unnecessarily exacting and suspicious. He tortures himself for these failings. He curses himself as a brute, who jealously tortures a devoted and faithful girl. 129. **indelicate**—not conceived in good taste. 141. **Sceptic in love**—one who doubts the faithfulness of love. 153. **dross of selfishness**—the impurity of selfishness in her love.

## ACT V. SCENE I

### (A) Analysis

(1) Julia waits for Faulkland who has sent her a false message about a dreadful accident in which he has been involved, for which he wants to meet her alone in their room. As Faulkland comes in, he invests the story of having killed a person in a duel with him for which he is now liable to be sentenced to death and says that he has decided to fly from England immediately for dear life. He wishes he had married Julia earlier so that she might share with him the sorrows and discomforts of his life of exile. At this, Julia proposes to go into exile with him, marry him later and share with him the sorrows of a life of poverty to exercise the moral right of helping her husband, under any adverse circumstances. After being thus satisfied with this new test of her sincerity and steadfastness, Faulkland now tells her that all he has just told her, was an invention for which he wants her to forgive him. He is now prepared to marry her the next day. Julia is terribly shocked.

ked at this incorrigible fault—the capricious jealousy of her lover. She throws him off in sheer, despair and leaves him. Faulkland is left to curse himself for having tortured a devoted and faithful girl.

(2) In despair, Faulkland now hastens to keep his appointment with Absolute at King's Mead-Fields where he is to act as his second in his duel with Sir Lucius. Lydia now comes to meet her cousin, Julia. She informs Julia of her heart-breaking discovery about her dear Beverley having been identified with Captain Absolute, much to her disappointment in the realisation of all the romantic dreams of her life. Julia gives Lydia the sober advice not to reject a man, who is so sincerely devoted to her only because the revelation of his real identity as Captain Absolute may shatter all her romantic plans of elopement and run-away marriage.

(3) At this moment, Mrs. Malaprop suddenly enters the room with Fag and David, shouting murder and man-slaughter in the fields. The two young girls now gather that Absolute, Acres, Faulkland and Sir Lucius are all involved in duels. Lydia is moved visibly at what untoward accident may now befall on Captain Absolute, forgetting all about her romantic dreams associated with Beverley. Mrs. Malaprop is understandably anxious about the fate of her lover, Sir Lucius. Julia is half-ready to receive her jilted lover, Faulkland.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene presents the fourth stage in the natural five-fold structure of the dramatic story *viz.*, falling action, resolution, or denouement of the main-plot preceded by the climax, crisis or turning-point in the complication created by conflicting forces in the previous scene (Act IV. Scene III). It also presents the 'crisis' of the sub-plot, the Faulkland-Julia episode, followed by its resolution or denouement, towards the latter part of the scene. The application of the new test of the sincerity and steadfastness of her love for Faulkland results in the temporary severances of her relations with him. This is the 'crisis' of the sub-plot—But it is also followed by its natural denouement which is discernible in the softening down of Julia towards her lover when she learns that he also be involved in the duel.

The scene is linked up with the main-plot. What happens to Julia and Faulkland has some bearing on the main-plot. Both

Lydia and Julia are in a sober and softened mood in the latter part of the play. In the case of Lydia, the ground is already prepared when she confesses to herself : "Though he used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my heart." All that she needs now is a lecture from Julia,—The female counterpart of the level-headed and matter-of-fact Absolute. Julia also softens her attitude towards Faulkland after her rejection of him when she hears that he is also present in the duel-scene and may recklessly kill himself in sheer despair.

Critics have blamed Sheridan for unnecessarily prolonging the sentimental effusions of Faulkland and Julia but it should be remembered that Sheridan has treated Faulkland in a spirit of genuine comedy and burlesque. Another point to be noticed in this scene is that Sheridan very cleverly makes the servants play a crucial part in unravelling the plot and contribute to the mirth of the audience.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

12. **untoward accident**—The idea of Absolute going to fight a duel with Sir Lucius has struck Faulkland that he may invent the story of having killed a person in a duel to test the constancy and steadfastness of the love of Julia for him. 26-30. **Cherub**—angel. **Upbraiding**—self-reproachful. 29-30. **Pluck compunction**—Remove and charm away all the cares of a heart, racked with painful feelings of repentance. Julia's speech seems rather an unconscious echo of sentimental diction. These sentimental scenes between Faulkland and Julia are considered by modern critics as blemishes in the play. 31. **Bankrupt in gratitude**—I feel at a loss to express my feelings of gratefulness. 35. **Prize.....engagement**—attach great importance to my promise to marry you. 40. **Hard aspersions**—severe criticism. 47-53. when Julia says that she would not mind the loss of Faulkland's income, Julia assures him that her small income will be just sufficient to enable them to carry on. At this, Faulkland torments her still further with the thought that exile and poverty will jointly conspire to make his temper more impatient and he may be a constant source of torture for her, 57. **Quarrel.....fondness**—not realise your great love for me. 71. **in the.....receive**—marry you before God the next day. 88-89. Julia says that she has borne enough of torment and Jealous trifling—that she has gone through the ordeal of these tests for one long year and yet the surprising thing is that she is



still being made to undergo a fresh test of sincerity and steadfastness of her love for him. 102. a licensed power—the powers of a husband under the law. an incorrigible fault—a suspicious nature that cannot be reformed. 119. Dolt—a dull fellow. barbarian—an unmannerly person. 121. heaven-gifted cherub—Julia is an angel gifted with many virtues with which she is endowed by God. 126. Tormenter—love that torments a lover's mind with jealousy and suspicion. Fiend—torturing devil. subtler spirits—sensitive minds of lovers like Faulkland. Sensibility—keenness of feeling. Love, working on dull persons makes them fools but when it works on the refined souls of over-sensitive lovers like Faulkland, it excites their tender feelings and tortures them to frenzy. 141-42. I would.....sister—When Lydia finds Julia weeping, she correctly guesses that her lover must have been very rude to her but Julia does not like to give out any secret about her love affair and accuse Faulkland. Julia does not accuse her love before anybody—not even her own sister. Note the contrasted characters. 144. Note the contrast between the two characters viz., Lydia and Julia here too. While Lydia wants to publicise, Julia wants to conceal her woes and sufferings. 153-162. This is how Lydia regrets the pricking of the bubble of her romantic dreams of elopement and run-away marriage with her Beverley and all the rest of it. Julia does not laugh at her romantic folly but is sedate enough to advise her not to reject her sincere lover and suffer for her caprice. Projected—planned. Becoming—suitable. amiable—lovely. 164. Sad reverse—sorrow arising out of disappointment. 165. a deal.....preparation—routine preparations connected with the ceremony of marriage. 166. Bishop's licence—the normal procedure of getting married viz., guardian's consent, formal announcement in the country-church followed by the application for a licence to the Bishop; who has to be satisfied first before a valid certificate can be issued. 166. to go.....alter—to proceed to the altar of the church while smiling in an afflicted manner all the time. 173-74. The dear.....shifts—the happy devices or expedients resorted to or adopted. 180. numbed—benumbed. 187-189. Not to.....inflict—From her bitter experience with her lover, Faulkland, Julia knows to her cost the tortures to which she was subjected because of his suspicious and exacting nature. She is now not in a mood to laugh at the romantic follies of Lydia but she would advise her

not to let her sincere lover (Captain Absolute) suffer from her caprices.

## ACT V. SCENE II

### (A) Analysis

(1) Captain Absolute is walking along the North Parade, waiting for Faulkland who will act as a second to his duel. He has his sword hidden under his great coat to meet his challenge at King's Mead-Fields with Sir Lucius and Acres. Noting his father coming up to him, he muffles up his face so as not to be recognised by him and pretends to be one Sanderson. But his father was too quick for him. He comes up to him and recognises his son. Absolute explains that he was after a little joke. He tells his father that he is going to see Lydia in order to bring about a reconciliation. Seeing that his father is about to accompany him to the place for duels, he advises his father not to expose himself to the cold wind far too much, otherwise his gout may trouble him. Sir Anthony now sees something bulging out of his son's great coat, so he puts his hand on his son's breast. Absolute says that he is taking some jewellery for Lydia. The father now pulls the coat open and the sword falls. Absolute explains this by inventing another lie *viz.* that he intends committing suicide before Lydia if she is not going to give him a patient and sympathetic hearing. At this, Sir Anthony is only half convinced and permits him to go his own way at last.

(2) Hardly has Absolute left when David comes running hot haste with cries of "murder," "fire" and asks Sir Anthony to stop Absolute. Sir Anthony is taken a-back at this news. But Absolute has already left. So Sir Anthony proceeds along with David toward King's Mead-Fields.

### (B) Dramatic Significance

This scene is practically a continuation of the First scene the latter part of which was directed towards the solution of the kind or tangle in the main-plot *i. e.*, the denouement. It presents a scene of reconciliation between the warring groups who are to assemble on the grounds of King's Mead-Fields for their duels *viz.*, Captain Absolute, the hero of the main-plot, Bob Acres and Sir Lucius while Faulkland, the hero of the sub-plot—is to act as a second to Absolute, in the next scene. Moderating forces to prevent mischief and tragedy are represented by the two servants, David and Fag, Sir Anthony and

the three ladies. The scene also gives the audience another display of wit and exchange of repartees as between the father and son. The father is still at it, even though out-witted and over-reached by his clever son, whose ready wit and resourcefulness are really remarkable.

### Notes, References, Explanations etc.

1-2. A sword.....dog—It was Beau Nash who “during his regime in Bath prohibited the wearing of swords, so as to discourage duelling. Duelling was strictly forbidden, and young gallants whenever they were shown to have challenged, were liable to be arrested.” 18-19. A joke Sir etc.—Notice that Captain Absolute resorts to various tricks and devices to throw his father off his scent in order to hoodwink him and escape. He has a keen sense of humour. In point of verbal wit, he is unsurpassed even by his witty father. Here he wants to explain his conduct (muffling up his face) by giving what he thinks some convincing excuses. 38. You.....out—Seeing that his father wants to accompany him, Captain Absolute tries to put him off on the ground that exposure to the cold winds may give him the gout. 53-54. You are.....throat—This is how Sir Anthony comments rather sarcastically about his son’s carrying a sword hidden inside his greats coat pockets. He asks if this is the kind of trinket (jewellery), he is taking in order to appease Lydia. To this, Absolute’s ready wit comes to his rescue. He says he is taking the sword in order to terrify Lydia by saying that if she does not relent, he will go to the length of committing suicide in her presence.

### ACT V. SCENE III

#### (A). Analysis

(1) Both Bob Acres, the foolish and cowardly squire and the veteran duellist—strange combination—are first at King’s Mead-Fields to fight out their duels with Beverley and Captain Absolute (identically the same person) that very evening. They are arranging the preliminaries. In the first duel, Lucius is to be Acres’ second (*i. e.*, support chosen by the principal to ensure fair play in the duel) while in the second, Faulkland (the hero of the sub-plot) is to act as Captain Absolute’s second.

(2) Acres is getting more and more afraid as the crucial hour of the duel approaches. He does his utmost to back out. (a) in the first, he would prefer fighting from a distance from which he can shoot more coolly than at short range, which is



against the rules of a duel ; (b) secondly, he will present a side-front rather than a full front, even though the former may involve him in a higher degree of probability of being hurt in his vital part.

(3) As soon as Acres sees his opponent with Faulkland enter the field, he feels like running away. Sir Lucius takes Faulkland to be Beverley but when he is told by Faulkland that he is not, Acres says that he will fight with none other than Beverley. At this stage, Absolute declares himself to be Beverley, when Acres says that he would not like to fight his dear friend, Absolute. Sir Lucius calls Acres a coward who is beneath his notice.

(4) Sir Lucius now draws his sword to meet his opponent, Absolute who is also ready to fight. Just then, Sir Anthony and his party including the ladies, arrive on the scene. They all intervene and prevent the fight. Mrs. Malaprop intercedes on behalf of the ladies, who, she says, are all upset about the duels, especially Lydia who is worried about Absolute and is now convinced of his love. Sir Lucius now comes forward taking advantage of Lydia's silence, to claim her affection under the delusion that she is his 'Delia.' At this, Lydia sets all doubt at rest by offering her hand to Absolute, asking at the same time for the return of his love. Absolute asks for Sir Lucius's pardon for any unintentional insult. Sir Lucius is generous enough to accept the apology of Absolute gracefully. Bob Acres also withdraws his candidature for the hand of Lydia, as he will not fight a duel in order to get a wife. At this stage, Sir Lucius takes out the love-letters supposed by him to have been written by Lydia—a mystery which is later solved by Malaprop who now declared herself to be 'Delia.' Sir Lucius would not have Mrs. Malaprop for a wife and jokes that Absolute may have the niece as well as the aunt. Sir Anthony steps in to cheer the discouraged Mrs. Malaprop saying, 'You are in your bloom yet.' Only Julia and Faulkland now remain to be reconciled. Sir Anthony advises them to get married directly. Acres and Sir Lucius congratulate the two pairs of lovers on the happy ending after a struggle. Sir Anthony proposes to drink their health and wishes a husband for Mrs. Malaprop. Lydia apologises to Absolute for having created so much troubles for him while Julia preaches sobriety and moderation as essential qualities needed for a successful and happy married life.

**(B) Dramatic Significance**

Sheridan's clever handling of the "denouement" and "conclusion" is simply brought out after the gradual withdrawal of the obstacles to the misunderstanding by which the wishes of the hero and the heroine of both the main and the sub-plot, have been thwarted by the "complications" created and their good fortune jeopardised. Sheridan has also enriched his 'denouement' with fun, mirth and laughter. Nemesis overtakes Mrs Malaprop at long last when it is left to Sir Anthony to come to her rescue with gentle irony and railleury. 'Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.' Sir Lucius, the blood-thirsty Philistine takes his failure to have his due more greatly when disillusioned and balked of his reward.

**Notes, References, Explanations etc.**

24-25. **In .....accident**—in the event of being killed by accident. 29. **unlucky bullet**—bullet the discharge of which is attended with fatal results : an instance of 'transferred epithet.' 30. **quietus**—death. 30-31. **It.....matters**—Sir Lucius tells Acres that questions of succession to the family-estate should be settled before the duel, as he may not get any such opportunity at all after it. 59. **My.....chance**—Acres will present a side-front, for, according to his calculation, the part of his body exposed to his adversary's bullet may be the minimum possible. Sir Lucius points out the danger of such a side-front confrontation and presentation, for in that case the shot may hit right or left vital part. So it will be better to present full-front which is also more gentle. 71. **I.....edge ways**—Acres refuses to be convinced by the argument of Sir Lucius, simply because he has not got the courage to confront his adversary. 139-40. **As his pretensions...characters**—Captain Absolute claims the hand of Lydia in the name of Beverley as well as that of Absolute. 155-156. **Pho...Pho.....notice**—Acres will neither fight with Faulkland whom Sir Lucius described as a representative of Beverley, nor with Captain Absolute who now tells him that he is the same person as Beverley, because he (Absolute) happens to be a friend of Acres, who proposes to act as a second to Sir Lucius. At this, Sir Lucius considers Acres to be too cowardly to be worth dealing with. 177. **amicable suit**—a suit which can be settled by friendly negotiations. 211. **trifling**—light-heartedness. 225. **I give .....claim**—Acres candidly declares that he prefers no claim

on Lydia. He would rather remain a bachelor than try for a wife by fighting a duel. 236. **Old gentle woman**—this is how the self-styled romantic Delia is called by Sir Lucius. Mrs. Malaprop has good grounds to feel offended by such a derogatory form of address. 240. **ungrateful etc.**—You are so indelicate as to disclose the letters. 249. **condescension**—stoop down so low as to show favour to a socially inferior person. 283. **delicacy... you**—Faulkland's jealousy proceeds from love for you, as he says. 366. **The bitters**—the bitter experiences. 316. **When..... fortunes**—When persons who deserve to be happy are united in happiness at long last. 318. **Ill-judging passions**—when passions cloud our vision and judgement and prevent us from taking a correct view of things.

### EPILOGUE

#### (A) Nature and Purpose of the Epilogue

The Epilogue is usually the concluding part of a drama—a speech or a short poem addressed to the audience by an actor or actress right at the end. Its purpose is to put the audience into the right mood of appreciation of the play or to humour it for all the trouble in sitting through the play or to crave the indulgence of the audience.

This particular epilogue is intended by Sheridan to pay a humorous compliment to women so to flatter the vanity of women on whom man's social happiness so largely depends. It was read out by Mrs. Bulkley who played the role of Julia.

#### (B) Analysis

All great art must be in harmony with those moral principles of conduct which it is the self-preservative instinct of civilized humanity to strengthen. No great artist, truly, so called can, therefore, be adverse or indifferent to ethics. This is Sheridan's thesis. So the moral to be derived from the comedy which the audience has just seen enacted on the stage before them, seems to be this: Man's social happiness depends on women. Although romantic love may be the main motive in a comedy, depicting social manners. It cannot be denied that women-characters are the sole arbiters who guide the plot and whose importance is universally recognised by men of every rank or station in life, who pay their compliments to women and realise their happiness in life by seeking to obey women.

Specific examples may now be given from men of upper and lower strata of social life as under:



### (1) Men of Rank

(1) The polished citizens may dine outside but they invariably do so with the permission of their wives.

(2) The rustic boor may have his supper outside but he will return home to describe the pleasure he has derived therefrom to his wife.

(3) The ill-tempered land-lord, who spends the greater part of the day in ruling over the others, mostly his tenants, will be won over by his wife to whose loving care he will give himself up at night when he comes back home.

(4) The drunkard gets himself dead-drunk after having quarrelled with youths till he is looked after by his wife.

(5) Wise statesmen bestow favour or frown on supplicants who wait on them according to the advice of their wives.

### (2) Men of Lower Rank

In humbler walks of life too, it is the wife who dominates the lives and fortunes of males.

(1) The poor peasant's wife is his sole and slender means of happiness ; she is his light in darkness and warmth in winter.

(2) The wandering sailor after a long sojourn through foreign lands, looks forward to his reunion with his wife at the end of his voyage.

(3) The soldier who suffers all the hardships of warfare on the battle-field, looks forward to his supreme triumph in the smiles of his sweetheart at the end.

(4) Cultured and refined persons, who appreciate beauty at its true worth, derive comfort and satisfaction from women of accomplishment, charm and wit, in addition to their physical charms.

Men would gladly submit themselves to the guidance of women if they are endowed with sense and intellectual power. Gallants who look to their sweet-hearts for inspiration, will tend to be ashamed of their weaknesses and learn to be wise, if only women have sense and spirit. Their love will kindle the flame of love also in them.

### Notes, References, and Explanations etc.

5. **damned**—condemned by the audience. 7. **From every... due**—Men of every rank (class) of life are bound to seek their happiness from women.

11. **Johu Trot**—a common name of a rustic boor.

14. **and half.....fool etc.**—For half the day, he may continue to swagger or to assert himself with oaths and tell his wife that she is but a fool but by the time night sets in, he cannot but be convinced that women should command men.

17. **Jolly Toper**—Pleasure-seeking drunkard. 19. **bumper**—a cup full of wine. 20. **chloe**—a loving wife. **Kisses...brim**—the drunkard kisses the brim of his wine-cup in the name of his loving wife. 21. **will.....eyes**—even great and wise statesmen are not immune from their wives' influence. They also tend to see through the eyes of their wives whose guidance they seek. 30. **From radiant.....light**—from the ardent love of his fair-minded wife. 41. **Nancy**—a nick name for a soldier's wife. 45. **droops etc.**—apt to faint at a sigh from his wife. 46. **nice-judging few**—the few blessed with fine judgment. 48-51. If only women are endowed with sense and intellectual power, men would invariably take all the lessons of their lives from their love. The victories of a woman would be incomplete unless she can give evidence of possessing a refined wit and her physical charms are supplemented and reinforced by her capacity for sound judgment.

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## IMPORTANT ANNOTATIONS

- (1) *Fag* : so it is.....me. (I. I. 31-33)

*Fag* assumes an air of superiority and tells Thomas that he is no longer a servant to Captain Absolute but is at the moment in the service of an Ensign Beverley. This does not mean any change of masters for they are identically the same person.

In the society of servants, *Fag* invariably claims superior knowledge. He has an innate love for mystification which arises from his intimate knowledge of the doings of his master, Captain Absolute. *native possessed, from birth*

- (2) *Fag* : why then.....Jupiter. (I. I. 39-41)

*Fag*, explains to Thomas, the coachman, that his master is in Bath, not in connection with his military duty but on a secret mission of love-making for which he passes himself off as a poor Ensign when he is really a Captain. It is common knowledge that not only people but even the greatest among gods viz, Jupiter practised such disguises according to classical stories of old while visiting earthly women in pursuit of love.

- (3) *Lucy* : Or 'the memoirs of.....to read. (I. II. 15-20)

To the eager enquiries of Lydia, Lucy, the maid-servant, informs her that both the books in question ('The Delicate Distress' and 'The Memoirs of Lady Woodford' presumably two romantic and indelicate autobiographies popular with giddy-headed, do-nothing young women) have been taken out by one Lady Slattern Lounger, who has made them so dirty after turning the corners that they cannot be handled by cultured persons of decent taste and delicate feelings.

- (4) *Sir Anthony* : Madam, a circulating.....at last. (I. II. 240-44)

*Sir Anthony* joins *hands* with the old aunt and puts down Lydia's romance and obstinacy to her reading trash. He does not wonder at her conduct because a little while ago he has seen Lucy taking out certain books from the circulating library for Lydia. He has always held that female education a dangerous thing and a circulating library is as harmful to the virtue of a young woman, as the Tree of Knowledge was to Eve in the



Garden of Eden, where she was tempted by Satan.

- (5) *Sir Anthony* : Why, what difference.....it stands. (II. I. 404-6)

Sir Anthony proposing to set his son on the road to economic independence, says that he is thinking of supplementing his son's poor income by an additional allowance which, however, will not come to a considerable sum. But Sir Anthony has also plans to settle him to noble independence, which depended on his son's taking a wife, according to his father's choice. The sudden mention of a wife puzzles Absolute who says that he cannot marry a woman whom he has not seen or known ; besides, he is already pledged to another lady. The father points out to his son that if his fortune comes through owning a big estate, he will have to take over the animals that are kept in the estate. This is a very fair and reasonable offer.

- (6) *Sir Anthony* : Let her foreclose.....no less there. (II. I. 422-425)

Here is a very lively exchange of witty repartees between the father and son, over the question of the choice of a wife. The father is trying to force his own choice on his son on the face of the son's statement that his heart has already been given to a lovely girl. Sir Anthony wittily replies that if his son has indeed given her his 'vows' as 'pledge' i. e., as a kind of security (just as a borrower keeps some valuable article with his creditor as security) the lady in question should be given the right to forfeit the security so as to absolve him from all debt. In short, the father means that the son should break off his relations with his beloved.

- (7) Upon my conscience.....of hearing. II. II. 41-44)

When Sir Lucius gets the expected letter from Lucy, he opens and reads it through. He finds that in her usual way, Mrs Malaprop (his Delia) has displayed her learned stupidity. While declaring her love for him, Sir Lucius ironically comments that his lady-love has a great command over the language and feels amused at her learned pretensions to learning. She is virtually 'a queen of the dictionary.' No word, however, much inappropriate it may be, dares disobey her call.

- (8) *Sir Lucy* : She must be.....Dhristendom. (II. II. 49-53)

Without understanding the real implications of the expression, 'queen of the dictionary,' used by Sir Lucius, Lucy defends

her mistress by saying that she is a lady of experience. Realising the very next moment that Lucy is about to betray the real truth by her inadvertence, she hastily adds that by 'experience' she really means that her mistress Lydia is a young girl who has read a lot of books. Sir Lucius concedes that her romantic effusions in the love-letter also prove that she is thoroughly posted with romances and novels. But he adds that even though so well-read, her language shows that she is very careless in the use of inappropriate words which can be detected by any sensible reader who knows the language, as they are very obvious.

(9) *Sir Anthony* : "Her eyes.....myself." (III. I. 123-26)

Absolute has already learnt from his servant, Fag that the girl of his father's choice was no other than Lydia. So now he puts on a show of repentance and surrenders himself to the will of his father, pretending to forego his own happiness merely to satisfy his father. The father has a shrewd suspicion that his son is playing the part of a hypocrite for it is so unnatural. He proposes to send his son with a letter of introduction to Mrs. Malaprop so that he may satisfy himself as to the truth of the description of her charms—the provoking look of the love-beaming eyes—which are so bright and fiery that they may very well enkindle his passion, just as Prometheus, one of the Titans, is said to have given fire to mankind from heaven. He expects his son to come back from such a visit, wild with excessive joy and full of eager desire to have her for a wife.

(10) *Faulkland* : O, Julia.....its birth. (III. 2. 98-100)

Faulkland propounds his theory of love, according to which real love does not depend on such accidental circumstance as age, wealth, handsome features and such other external qualities which ordinarily influence woman to go in for a husband who happens to possess them. He believes women often love a man for his handsome features, his wealth—his power, influence and position in society and so forth but not for his own sake. This is the case with Julia.

The fact is that Faulkland is incorrigibly capricious, irrationally jealous and unnecessarily exacting and suspicious. He loves to torture Julia with his caprices. He has a somewhat romantic conception of himself as an ideal lover.

## THE RIVALS

(11) *Absolute* : Thus like garden-trees.....at once ! (III. 3. 20-23)

Armed with a letter of introduction from his father, Absolute pays a visit to Mrs. Malaprop who is to arrange a meeting between the two young persons. When Absolute pays a mock compliment to Mrs. Malaprop's accomplishments and learning, the latter regrets that men are often carried away by physical beauty in women and do not in the least care for their intellectual accomplishments. Absolute agrees with her but shifts the blame as well to women, who also prize their physical beauty far too much. They are like ordinary garden-trees which do not show fruit before their flowers of attractive colours fade away. The result of this over-much attention to their physical beauty is that when they advance in years, they lose beauty and youth but do not improve in knowledge. Mrs. Malaprop is a singular exception to the average run of women.

(12) *Mrs. Mal* : There, Sir, an attack.....epithaphs.—(III. 3.75-79)

Mrs. Malaprop complains to Absolute about one Ensign Beverley, a secret lover of Lydia. She has forbidden her to be in love with such a beggarly fellow. She takes out a love-letter from this fellow intercepted by her, and gives it to Absolute to read it through. As absolute reads a portion of the letter, he himself has written, he refers to her muddle-headed use of learned words and describes her to be a stupid old woman who does not understand what she writes. Mrs. Malaprop is much pained at this charge and thinks it nothing short of brutish for a youngman to attack her use of the language.

(13) But these outlandish.....Anti galliean toes. (III. IV. 33-39)

Acres, the foolish country-squire, who aspires to transform himself into a city-beau from a fox-hunting true-born English country-gentleman. has just sent away his servant, David, to call his French dancing-master. He tries to get up correctly the steps in intricate French and German dances. But being a true-born Englishman he concludes that his legs, which are genuinely English in their habits of movement, do not understand the ~~accursed~~ French terms and he finds it impossible to train his legs in the steps and the intricate evolutions of foreign dances.



- (14) *Acres* : Faith I have followed.....gentleman. (III. IV. 46-49)

When Sir Lucius pays a visit to Bob Acres in the latter's lodgings, he enquires of him the precise nature of business which has brought him to Bath. Acres explains that he has come to Bath all of a sudden in pursuit of love but unfortunately he finds himself ousted in favour of a rival named Ensign Beverley. He is afraid lest Cupid, the god of love, should tempt him with a deceptive hope and land him into a morose from which it may be difficult for him to extricate himself just as the Will 'o the wisp tempts night-travellers by its deceptive light till they get stuck up in a quagmire. *marsh*

- (15) *Acres* : Od's balls and...such deeds.' (III. IV. 105-108)

When Sir Lucius learns from Acres that he aspires the hand of Lydia (whom he knows to be Delia) in marriage and that he has been dismissed by Mrs. Malaprop in favour of a rival, named Ensign Beverley, he incites Acres to challenge his rival in a duel for the sake of his honour. Sir Lucius's motive is to remove from his path both the aspirants after the hand of Lydia. He (Sir Lucius) does not know yet that Acres is a great coward, who simply does not understand why he should fight the unknown Beverley, having had no provocation from him at all. When, however, Sir Lucius points out that his honour is involved, Acres is at once excited to fight. He swaggers by an oath and is resolved to meet his adversary on the duel-ground. Thus the argument used by Sir Lucius, acts like thunder acting on milk of his heart, driving away from it all soft and tender considerations. Like Hamlet, he now behaves like a romantic gallant, raging in all angry mood against his adversary, who urges him to do bloody deeds of murder.

- (16) *Faulkland* : "O Love ! tormenter ! fiend !...madness !  
(V. I. 126-29)

When Julia leaves her room in a mood of impatient disgust at the torment of her lover, Faulkland curses himself as a fool and a barbarian who has driven away a veritable angel from his side. He also excuses himself that love is a passion that works strongly on sensitive souls like his and maddens it. Love is like the moon, believed to turn the wit of a shallow-brained person and make them behave like a fool. When love works on the souls of sensitive lovers like Faulkland, it excites their tender feelings so much so that they torture them as does the frenzy of a mad man. Faulkland holds the god of love responsible for the tortures to which he has been subjected under the influence of what he calls true love.

## UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### A. General and Critical

1. Give a brief account of the life and works of Sheridan.
2. (a) Indicate the place of Sheridan in the history of English drama and his contribution to it.  
(b) Write an essay on the 18th century drama with special reference to Sheridan.  
(c) "As a dramatist Sheridan reverts to Congreve, while Goldsmith harks back to Shakespeare." Elucidate.  
(d) In what direction was Sheridan's work for the Comedy of Manners an improvement upon Restoration Comic play?  
(e) Discuss Sheridan as portrayer of dramatic situations and as a dramatic craftsman.  
(f) Estimate Sheridan as a dramatist.  
(g) "Sheridan's comedy is artificial, not natural and the touch-stone of his excellence is not life, but manners." (Saunders). Discuss.  
(h) Do you agree with the view that in spite of his success and popularity, the higher reaches of comic drama were beyond Sheridan?  
(i) Describe the social setting of the Age of Johnson and the literary background.

### Answers

1. See (A) (2)
2. (a) (A) (b).  
(b) (A) (4);  
(c) (A) (4)  
(d) (B) (5) (b)  
(e) (B) (3) (d)  
(f) (A) (3)  
(g) (B) (5) (b)  
(h) (B) (7) (d)  
(i) (A) (1)

### B. Special

3. Write a note on the circumstances of the composition, the dates of composition and production of the 'Rivals.'

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A. Gen. Intro. B. Sp. Intr. C. Text. D. Notes.

4. How do you account for the popularity, past and present, of 'The Rivals' ?
5. Give a brief account of the 'sources' of 'The Rivals.' Do they detract from the originality of Sheridan in the drama? How does Sheridan defend himself against the charge of plagiarism? How can you defend him against such a charge?
6. How far can 'The Rivals' be taken as autobiographical?
7. What is meant by "Sentimentalism"? Examine Sheridan's attitude towards the Sentimental Comedy as revealed in 'The Rivals'. Distinguish 'The Rivals' from a Sentimental Comedy.
8. What do you mean by Artificial Comedy? Does 'The Rivals' belong to this class of Comedy?
9. How does Sheridan attack the Sentimental Comedy of the age in his Second Prologue and the play itself? consider the view that 'The Rivals,' for all Sheridan's professions is not completely devoid of Sentimental and an Anti-sentimental Comedy.
10. Give an account of the Social History of the Time as portrayed in "The Rivals."
11. Justify and explain the Title of the Play.
12. What do you understand by a Comedy of Manners? Examine the claims of 'The Rivals' as a Comedy of Manners.
13. To what specific dramatic type does 'The Rivals' belong? Is it for instance : (a) a Farcical Comedy or just a Comedy; (b) or an Artificial Comedy of Manners ; (c) an anti-sentimental Comedy ; (d) a Comedy of Intrigue and Situation or (e) just a Satirical Comedy?
14. "Sheridan's first impulse towards dramatic writing was always satiric." Elucidate with reference to 'The Rivals.'
15. Write an essay on Sheridan's art of characterisation in 'The Rivals' or Sheridan as an interpreter of character. What are the general and special characteristics of his men and women? What defects do you notice in his characterisation?
16. What is 'Malapropism'? Give some outstanding examples of errors and classify them.
17. Discuss the role of minor characters in the play. To what extent do they take a hand in the action and the development of the plot and contribute to the spirit of wit and fun in the comedy?



18. 'The Rivals' is primarily a drama of situations and intrigue." Elucidate.
19. Give a brief outline of the plot.
20. Sketch the characters of :  
 (a) Sir Anthony Absolute; (b) Captain Absolute; (c) Faulkland; (d) Lydia; (e) Julia; (f) Mrs. Malaprop; (g) Bob Acres; (h) Sir Lucius O'Trigger; (i) Fag; (j) David; (k) Lucy.  
 Compare and contrast : (a) Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute; (b) Lydia and Julia; (c) Captain Absolute and Faulkland.
21. Write an Appreciation of Sheridan's 'Preface' as a piece of self-criticism.
22. "No one pulls the wires so dexterously as Sheridan." Discuss and illustrate.
23. "Though there is something of farce in every comedy," this strain weakens the general effect of Sheridan's work." Discuss and illustrate.
24. Write a Critical Appreciation of the Play.

### Answers

- (B) 3. See B (i)  
 4. See Above.  
 5. See B (2)  
 6. See Above.  
 7. See B (5) (C)  
 8. See B (5) (B)  
 9. See B (5) (c), (6) (d) (F) Notes on the Second Prologue.  
 10. See B (6) (a) (b)  
 11. See B (4)  
 12. See B (5) (b)  
 13. See B (5)  
 14. See B (5) (e)  
 15. See B (7) (a) (b) (d)  
 16. See B (8)  
 17. See B (7) (c)  
 18. See B (5) (d)  
 19. See B (3)  
 20. See B (9)  
 21. See D  
 22. See B (5)  
 23. See B (5) (a)  
 24. See B (7) (d)

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## SHAKESPEAREAN STUDIES

1. Tempest
2. Othello
3. As You Like It
4. Macbeth
5. Henry V
6. Cymbeline
7. Hamlet
8. Romeo & Juliet
9. Love's Labour's Lost
10. Antony & Cleopatra
11. Twelfth Night
12. King Lear
13. King Henry IV, Part I
14. Coriolanus
15. Julius Caesar
16. Merchant of Venice
17. A Midsummer Night's Dream
18. Much Ado About Nothing
19. Measure for Measure
20. The Winter's Tale
21. Sonnets
22. Timon of Athens